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The Economic Crisis

THE EDITORS

Class Power and Alienated Labor

SAMUEL BOWLES
HERBERT GINTIS

Politics as Sports

IKE BALBUS

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

What kind of a magazine does MR aim to be? Basically, the answer to this question has two parts, one relating to contents and the other to readership: (1) We want to publish the best of radical thought, in principle on almost any subject but in practice with an inevitable strong bias toward the subjects about which we feel able to make a competent judgment. (2) The readers we want to reach may be specialists in many fields or in no field; what they have in common is a profound interest in radical thought and (we hope) a strong desire to use it to change the world. We take it for granted that they are very busy people, both as workers in various fields and as militants or activists. Certain things follow from these premises. If MR is to achieve its aims, the material it publishes must be clear and brief. This can be accomplished in two ways: either authors write with these criteria in mind, or we as editors take what comes in and put it into proper shape. Some magazines operate on this second principle. For example, *Scientific American* publishes material by top-notch scientists for readers who have in common only a strong interest in what goes on in the world of science (this of course includes many scientists who are highly specialized in their own fields). With few exceptions, these science authors are not good at presenting their material

(*Continued on inside back cover*)

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THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

To understand the nature and possible consequences of the present economic crisis, we have to try to put it into proper historical perspective. And in order to do this, we must keep firmly in mind that the real history of capitalism results from the interplay of the inner logic of the system and the changing environment within which it operates. For our present purposes, the crucially important laws of motion inherent in the set of social relations which constitute the capitalist mode of production can be briefly summarized as follows:

(1) Competition of capitals generates concentration and centralization, hence the inevitable replacement of competitive by monopoly capitalism.

(2) The accumulation process is inherently unstable and never tends to take the form of a moving equilibrium (a fantasy of bourgeois economics textbooks). Two forms of motion, attributable to related but distinguishable structural features of the system, characterize the accumulation process: (a) the more or less regular ups and downs of the business cycle (in recent times the length of the cycle, from peak to peak or trough to trough, has tended to be around four years); and (b) a long-range and persistent tendency to stagnation mani-

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fested in high rates of unemployment and much idle productive capacity.

(3) The process of monopolization has relatively little effect on the business cycle, but it exacerbates the tendency to stagnation.

It follows from these laws that the *normal* state of the system in its monopoly stage is one of cyclical ups and downs in a context of continuing stagnation. If during any period of time this is not the *actual* state of the system, this fact requires to be explained by historical forces which operate on the system but are not presupposed as being essential to its existence.

In fact, of course, there have been fairly long periods during which the accumulation process has proceeded in a vigorous fashion with (apart from cyclical downswings) the demand for labor power expanding rapidly and productive capacity being utilized at or close to full capacity.* If we examine these periods closely, we find that some combination of the following factors is responsible for the prolonged buoyancy of the accumulation process:

(1) A major innovation involving new technology, new products, and far-reaching changes in the pattern of economic activity. Such were the steam engine in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the railroad in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the automobile in the twentieth century.

(2) Imperialist expansion and colonial wars.

(3) Wars among the imperialist powers.

(4) Reconstruction after major wars and preparation for new wars.

All of these factors have at one time or another played a

* Over the whole history of capitalism the timing of these periods has varied considerably from country to country, this being one aspect of what Lenin called the law of uneven development. In this essay, unless otherwise indicated, we shall be referring to the United States. At the same time it is important to note that in the last half century there has been a strong trend to greater synchronization among the main capitalist centers. The Great Depression affected the whole capitalist world, as did the secular boom of the 1950s and 1960s. And of course the present crisis has hit all but a handful of oil-rich countries.

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crucial role in shaping the course of the accumulation process, in the United States as well as in other parts of the capitalist world. In this country, the railroad directly absorbed about as much capital as all manufacturing and extractive industries combined from the 1850s on, and of course it was indirectly responsible for capital's penetrating the interior of the continent and providing employment for a large part of the great waves of immigrant workers which characterized that period. It can be shown that this "railroad era" came to a rather abrupt end with the (cyclical) panic and depression of 1907, and that nothing came along to take its place until the First World War. Not surprisingly, therefore, the years 1908-1915 were a period of deepening stagnation, with unemployment averaging 6.6 percent of the labor force (more than double the average for the preceding eight-year period), reaching 9.7 percent in 1915.*

What saved the United States from entering a "Great Depression" at that time was the First World War, and what sustained the economy during the 1920s was the first great wave of automobilization, a term which should be interpreted to include not only the development of the automobile industry itself but also many related industries and activities (oil, glass, steel, rubber, highway construction, suburban growth, etc.). The years 1916-1929 were therefore a period of relatively strong expansion and reduced unemployment (average = 4.5 percent), hailed by exuberant economists of the day as a "New Era" which would, in the words of President Herbert Hoover, put a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.

But the euphoria was short-lived. Nineteen twenty-nine saw the beginning of a regular cyclical downturn; and this time, as had been the case after 1907 only more so, there were no underlying factors of strength to produce a rapid or buoyant recovery. The system's natural tendency to stagnation took over: that monopoly capitalism has no strong internal recuperative power was now demonstrated with brutal clarity.

Politically, the reaction in the United States to the Great

* Details in Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, pp. 219-234.

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Depression was the New Deal, a loosely coordinated set of liberal reformist policies. The New Deal attempted to institute countermeasures, but, apart from alleviating the suffering of the depression's hardest-hit victims, these measures had little effect. The normal business-cycle upswing of the 1930s, which lasted from 1933 to 1937, naturally brought the unemployment rate down, but only from 24.9 percent in 1933 to 14.3 percent, after which it shot up again to 19 percent in the sharp recession of 1938. The key to an understanding of the 1930s—which for a time bourgeois economists like Alvin Hansen and his followers seemed to have grasped, but which even they forgot after the Second World War—was and is that stagnation is the normal and natural condition of monopoly capitalism. During that decade there were no outside stimulating forces of the kind that have always been essential to set capitalism on a sustained upward course.

That is, there were no such forces until the Second World War came along at the very end of the decade. This inaugurated a new period which (for the United States) lasted an extraordinarily long time by previous capitalist standards—a period of some 30 years of expansion, interrupted only by more or less regularly recurring mild recessions.* The driving forces this time were world war, preparation for new wars and waging of large-scale regional wars (Korea and Vietnam), and the second great wave of automobilization.** The reader should be reminded again that automobilization means not only building factories and cars but also highways (now superhighways and freeways) and suburbs, only in recent times the suburbs have been more like extensions of the cities, giving rise to the relatively new

* It is true that the recessions were mild, but the one that commenced in 1958 showed ominous signs of degenerating into stagnation. What came to the rescue was a big increase in war preparations under the Kennedy administration, followed by the Vietnam War itself.

** In the case of the other advanced capitalist countries it was really the first wave of automobilization. And it is worth noting that for the two largest of them, Germany and Japan, recovery from the destruction and prostration of defeat in the Second World War was sparked by orders for armaments and other industrial products stemming, directly and indirectly, from the Korean War.

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phenomena of urban sprawl and inner-city decay. There were also many new inventions and technologies, mostly war-related, which played a part in this period, but which by themselves could hardly have been sufficient to prevent the system from sinking into a new phase of stagnation.

All movements of the capitalist economy are accompanied, partly caused, and invariably complicated by their financial aspects, which indeed constitute an absolutely central part of the whole capitalist process. This has been especially, or perhaps it would be better to say spectacularly, true of the long upswing of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

As a result of shortages, price controls, rationing, and the methods adopted to finance the Second World War, the U.S. economy emerged from that conflict in an unprecedentedly liquid condition. Consumers had pretty well paid off their debts and had savings as well as fresh borrowing power. And the same held true for most businesses, especially the largest ones. For nonfinancial corporations with assets of over $100 million, the average liquidity ratio (cash and government securities divided by short-term debts) was well over 100 percent, while interest charges plus debt repayments absorbed no more than 6 percent of consumer incomes. (For further details, see "The Long-run Decline in Liquidity" in this space in the September 1970 issue of MONTHLY REVIEW.) The stage was set for the financing of the upswing about to take place through an easy and rapid increase of debt, private and public. This always happens to some extent in upswings: what especially characterizes the one we are now discussing is its length and extent on the one hand, and the proliferation of lending institutions (nurtured hot-house fashion by a multiplicity of government policies and institutions) on the other.

By the end of the 1960s, with the United States being forced by Vietnamese resistance and rising antiwar feeling at home to reduce its military commitment in Southeast Asia, the underlying expansionary forces were clearly weakening, and the long upswing was showing signs of coming to its natural end in a period of stagnation similar to that of the 1930s. What kept things going for a while longer was a truly monumental

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and frantic expansion of debt-financed private and public spending. Given the pervasiveness of monopoly in the U.S. economy—much deeper and more widespread than in the 1920s and 1930s—this burst of debt-financed spending produced a growing inflation of prices which was now superimposed on the incipient downswing of the system as a whole. (For a fuller analysis, see "Keynesian Chickens Come Home to Roost," the Review of the Month in the April 1974 issue of MONTHLY REVIEW.)

From that point on we have had to endure at one and the same time two of capitalism's endemic maladies: burgeoning debt and inflation on the one hand, deepening stagnation (as evidence, e.g., by the steadily rising rate of unemployment) on the other. This condition has now been christened by the economic pundits who did not foresee it and can offer no sensible explanation for it. The name is as ugly as the phenomenon itself: stagflation, i.e., stagnation plus inflation, a combination which prior to the maturing of monopoly capitalism would have been considered as impossible as dry water.

To dramatize the situation, let us quote a lengthy passage from *Business Week*, usually a staid and unsensational magazine addressed to business executives. This is from a special supplement to the issue of October 12 entitled "The Debt Economy":

> The U.S. economy stands atop a mountain of debt $2.5 trillion high—a mountain built of all the cars and houses, all the factories and machines that have made this the biggest, richest economy in the history of the world. . . . The U.S. is the Debt Economy without peer. It has the biggest lenders, the biggest borrowers, the most sophisticated financial system. The numbers are so vast that they simply numb the mind: $1-trillion in corporate debt, $600-billion in mortgage debt, $500-billion in U.S. government debt, $200-billion in state and local government debt, $200-billion in consumer debt. To fuel nearly three decades of postwar economic boom at home and export it abroad, this nation has borrowed an average of $200-million a day, each and every day, since the close of World War II. . . .
>
> And there are signs of tension everywhere: corporate debt-equity ratios way out of line, consumer installment-debt repayment taking a record share of disposable income, the huge real-

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estate market in desperate trouble despite all the federal government has done to save it. Never has the Debt Economy seemed more vulnerable, with a distressing number of borrowers and lenders in precarious shape.

Two of the subheads further on in this article read: "No Right Answer" and "A Choice of Disasters." By "A Choice of Disasters," the editors of *Business Week* mean that either the bubble will burst, as it has innumerable times in capitalist history, most recently in the 1930s; or the government will ease its monetary and credit policies and in this way further feed the inflation. What should perhaps be added is that the two "disasters" are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The big banks and corporations are betting that this time it will not come to a 1930s-type crash because the government will not allow it. Here is what the First National City Bank said in its September *Monthly Economic Letter* (the article is entitled "The Great Depression: History Never Really Repeats Itself"):

> There is—or should be—little doubt that central banks today will assist any major bank whose liquidity has been impaired by general economic conditions. The Fed's passivity in 1930-1933 when faced with widespread bank failures belongs to a different time with a different view of a central bank's role.
>
> And now, in the United States, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation stands guard against a re-run of the 1930s. By guaranteeing deposits up to $20,000, it virtually underwrites them as federal obligations. This destroys most of the seeds of public panic.

What New York's largest bank is saying here is that the Federal Reserve will take care of the big boys and the FDIC of the little fellows.*

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* It should be noted that First National City speaks of assistance to "major" banks. What is likely to happen to those which do not make it to the top rank was illustrated in January when the U.S. Comptroller of the Currency, one of the chief bank regulatory agencies, virtually forced the ailing Security National Bank to sell out to the huge Chemical Bank at a non-competitive price, thus presenting Chemical at one stroke with scores of prized branch locations on Long Island.

With regard to the FDIC, we pointed out in this space last month ("Banks: Skating on Thin Ice," p. 14) that as presently set up this is an insurance company with assets grossly inadequate to cope with a

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This may well be true; in fact we think it probably is. In the Great Depression banks failed in large numbers for some three years before FDR, on coming to office in March 1933, declared a bank holiday. This time it would probably happen immediately the threat became imminent. But this should not give rise in anyone to a false sense of optimism. Forestalling the banking panic of 1930-1933—even if it had been done, as some proposed at the time, by nationalizing the whole banking system—would not have prevented the Great Depression. Nor would it today. The real question is what will happen even if there is no collapse of the banking system, however it may be prevented. Latest official figures put the unemployment rate nationwide at 8.2 percent, the highest recorded since 1941 (9.9 percent); and the Ford administration, abandoning Washington's usual Pollyannish style (for what obscure political reasons we do not pretend to know), has candidly admitted that the rate will remain high by postwar standards for the rest of the decade.* This means in effect that it has now been officially proclaimed that the U.S. economy has entered a new and prolonged period of stagnation.

What does this imply politically? What ruling-class and working-class reactions are likely to develop? What kind of government policies are being talked about, and which stand a chance of being put into practice? We shall return to these and related questions in next month's Review of the Month.

(February 12, 1975)

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general collapse of the banking system. The people at First National City are obviously assuming that if such a contingency should arise, the government itself would step in and assume responsibility for all insured deposits.

* Whether the projections contained in the President's Economic Report to the Congress, high as they are, don't still reflect an "optimistic" bias is another question. We plan to devote a special study to the whole question of unemployment in an early issue.

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CLASS POWER AND ALIENATED LABOR

BY SAMUEL BOWLES
AND HERBERT GINTIS

In 1844 Karl Marx introduced the concept "alienated labor" into the raging intellectual battles concerning the nature of the emerging capitalist order. Marx was prophetic indeed. In the past few decades, after resting in academic obscurity for nearly a century, the term has been elevated to a central position in social criticism.

The recent revival of the concept of alienation among radicals owes much to those movements which have brought discontent among rank-and-file workers, students, women, and others into the political arena. Corporate and political elites, too, have taken up the term, though more often in response to their peculiar needs: combating worker absenteeism, sabotage, and lagging productivity; controlling and containing youth culture; reasserting the legitimacy of authority on the campus;

The authors, who teach political economy at the University of Massachusetts, are co-authors of a forthcoming work, to be published by Basic Books, on education and capitalism in the United States. They would like to acknowledge financial support from the Ford Foundation in conducting the research on which this article is based.

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and smoothly integrating new workers into the wage-labor system. The concept of alienation has become important as well in the analysis and critique of social structure and social change in the state socialist nations of Eastern Europe.

The growing awareness of the social basis of alienation—an awareness of quite recent vintage—has as yet failed to produce an adequate social analysis. This is due in part to the particular form in which this awareness is couched: alienation is seen as arising directly from the nature of technology in "modern industrial society," and hence as remaining independent of any particular set of economic institutions. This view is reinforced through our understanding of the historical development of capitalism's main "competitor," state socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. So-called "socialist man" seems to differ little from his capitalist counterpart, and so-called "socialist society" seems little better equipped to avoid the problems of Alienated Man than its avowed adversary.

We shall try to show in this paper not only that alienation is a social rather than a psychological problem at its root, but that it results from the structure of technology only in the most immediate and superficial sense, in that the form that technological development takes is itself strongly influenced by the structure of economic institutions and their day-to-day operations. If capitalist and so-called socialist economies experience these same problems, it is due to the essential similarity of their basic economic institutions, a similarity only minimally affected by differences in the legal patterns of ownership of capital.

We will analyze the labor process in terms of a pair of contradictions. First, there is the broad and ubiquitous contradiction between the needs of the community for the products of work and the self-actualizing needs of the workers as affirmed or negated in the production process. Second, and more narrowly, there is the contradiction between those who direct the production process and those who effect it. Under capitalism this latter conflict takes the form of the antagonistic contradiction between capital and labor.

These twin contradictions arise logically and inevitably in any economic system in which there is an advanced social

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division of labor—i.e., in which immediate producers orient their products toward a community extending beyond their immediate families, and the production process is sufficiently complex that some differentiation, however flexible and democratic, between coordination, control, and actual production is organizationally or technologically dictated.

Our concept of alienated labor and its opposite—which we call integrated labor—is based on an analysis of the process of individual development in light of these contradictions. This process may be depicted as a dialectical interaction between individual and environment with three major aspects. First, the capacities—be they physical, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, or spiritual—on which personal well-being depends develop through the types of social intercourse the individual sustains, both with natural objects and with other individuals. In particular, workers develop their personal powers and self-concepts through the work relations they enter in daily life. Second, individuals can control their personal development by placing themselves advantageously within the social environment confronting them, as well as by acting consciously and effectively to modify the characteristics of this environment. Thus, the worker may guide his or her own personal development both by choosing a more or less desirable job with advantageous social conditions, and by bringing these social conditions, through conscious activity, into conformity with his or her developing needs. Hence the process of guiding personal development through the continual affirmation and transformation of work relations, and not merely the social relations of work as a static end-result, is crucial to liberated development. And third, since many central aspects of the social environment can be modified only through the collective activity of several individuals involved in its reproduction, people in general can control the environment within which they jointly develop by mutually regulating the interactions among themselves, and by controlling the conditions under which they strike common goals and strategies for their developmental needs. In particular, the process of personal development through modification of work relations is inherently *social*. Because the production process

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is necessarily a cooperative enterprise, regulation requires solidarity and coordination among participants.

In this setting people control their personal development by progressively tailoring their social environment to their manifest needs through their conscious wills. A sphere of social life will be called *integrated* if the social institutions and power relations of this sphere facilitate the translation of human needs into social outcomes through individual choice and collective action. When a sphere of social life (e.g., education, work, community) is integrated, it develops historically in conformity with the developmental needs of individuals. The transformed social environment, by satisfying these needs and creating a consciousness of further needs, thus creates the conditions for its further transformation and development. In an integrated setting, personal development and the development of the social environment proceed hand in hand.

A sphere of social life will be called *alienated* if the social institutions and power relations of this sphere do *not* allow the translation of human needs into social outcomes. In an alienated setting the course of change in the social environment follows a logic of its own, "alien" to the individual choices and collective actions of its participants. In particular, the social relations of work in society will be alienated if the social determinants of jobs and the historical development of social labor do not reflect individual needs, as embodied in the individual and collective decisions of those who perform on the job, within the limits imposed by the technologies actually and potentially at hand. When social labor is alienated, the dialectical interaction between people and their work is broken in the sense that, while the social experience continues to take its toll on individuals, they have little power to turn this experience to their advantage. Alienated labor thus thwarts rather than fosters personal development.

We hold that the social relations of work in capitalist society are alienated in the above sense. We shall suggest, moreover, that alienated labor is due directly to the *class nature* of production. Far from being analytically separate phenomena, alienated labor and the domination of labor by capital are two sides of the same coin. The dialectical interaction between

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work and individual development is broken by a minority of participants—capitalist employers and managers—in order to secure profits and to perpetuate their class position. The hierarchical division of labor, a prime instrument in the domination of workers, fosters alienated labor in several ways. First, profits depend on the secure top-down control of the labor force, a prerequisite for which is the fragmentation of workers' solidarity; the hierarchical division of labor prohibits the formation of bonds of solidarity through which workers can properly coordinate to transform (or affirm) their social conditions. Second, this lack of power of workers allows bosses to determine the conditions of work and the historical transformation of these conditions, not according to criteria of human need but of secure profits and managerial control. Third, even the individual's decision to opt for some jobs and reject others will not lead to a gradual increase in the supply of "desirable" jobs, because the only essential choice the worker has is to accept or reject a job whose content is determined by others, on the basis of profit and control. In all these respects, work appears as a "fact of life" to which individuals must by and large submit and over which they have no control. Like the weather, work "happens" to people. In this case, work is an alienated activity.

Yet alienated labor is by no means an inevitable "fact of life" in advanced societies. We will conclude that a reorganization of economic life around the norms of integrated work requires a thoroughgoing transformation of relations of class, power, and authority in U.S. society.

The social transformation our analysis bids us advocate is that of a socialist economy. The socialism we envisage, however, goes far beyond the traditional models of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This kind of socialism socializes the ownership of the means of production, while leaving the patterns of control of production in the hands of a minority whose social position depends on its exercise. In short, the internal social relations of production coincide more or less with that of a capitalist enterprise. Hence, much of our analysis of alienated labor under capitalism applies equally to the state socialist system as well. Whatever may be the benefits of state socialism, integrated work is not one of them.

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Integrated and Alienated Labor

The production of material output is only one of the functions of work. Others include the economic security of the worker, social relations among workers, and, most important, the development of the human potentialities of the worker—as a social being, as creator, and as master of nature. Indeed, Marx was only one of many who considered work as the essence of human activity: "Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion, or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence."

The worker, in the process of production, produces not only material products, but *himself* or *herself* as well:

> [Labor is] a process going on between man and nature, a process in which man, through his own activity, initiates, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and nature. He confronts nature as one of her own forces. . . . By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature.

The connection between work and social life is one of the classic questions in sociology. As the sociologist Elliot Jacques eloquently attests:

> Working for a living is one of the basic activities in a man's life. By forcing him to come to grips with his environment, with his livelihood at stake, it confronts him with the actuality of his personal capacity—to exercise judgment, to achieve concrete and specific results. It gives him a continuous account of his correspondence between outside reality and the inner perception of that reality, as well as an account of the accuracy of his appraisal of himself. . . . In short, a man's work does not satisfy his material needs alone. In a very deep sense, it gives him a measure of his sanity.

Accordingly, in proportion as work is broad or narrow, stimulating or monotonous, it develops or stunts one's abilities. Only variety of work can develop the many sides of human ability and character.

Moreover, since individuals develop their personalities and consciousness *through* the way they relate to productive activity, work is the basis for the formation of social classes. Classes are groups of individuals who relate to the ownership and control

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of the means of production in similar ways. Thus, insofar as capitalists and workers, farmers and wage laborers, white-collar and blue-collar workers, male wage-laborers and female domestic workers, are subject to different experiences and property relations in production, they tend to develop distinct cultures, life-styles, interests, and ideologies. Thus, social stratification and the fragmentation of the working class is itself based on the experience of individuals in production.

In short, the quality of work has an impact on the individual extending far beyond immediate satisfaction on the job. The degree of control over processes, outcomes, and interpersonal relations determines the extent to which work is a creative, socially constructive outlet. The challenge of work, or lack thereof, measurably affects the development of the worker's physical, cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic capacities. And finally, the content of work, its social valuation and social contribution, are basic elements of the individual's self-esteem.

It is a major indictment, then, of our social system that most people view their jobs as, at best, a painful necessity. While wages, physical working conditions, and job security have improved dramatically over the years for most workers, there is still discontent. Absenteeism, high turnover, wildcat strikes, industrial sabotage, and willful laxity of job performance have all increased dramatically in the past decade. *Work in America,* the recent report of a special task force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, documents that only 43 percent of white-collar and 24 percent of blue-collar workers, in a large representative sample, say they are satisfied with their jobs. Good pay and working conditions are not enough—workers want creative and meaningful jobs. In the words of the HEW report: "What the workers want most, as more than 100 studies in the past 20 years show, is to become masters of their immediate environments and to feel that their work and they themselves are important—the twin ingredients of self-esteem."

The testimony of thousands of workers, and hundreds of recent studies, is starkly reminiscent of Marx's description of alienated labor, written 130 years ago:

> What, then, constitutes the alienation of labor? First, the fact that labor is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his

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essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labor.* It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification.

Markets, Technology, and Alienated Work

Few readers will question our broad characterization of work in the corporate capitalist economy. But have we correctly identified capitalism as the source of the problem? If the historical development of the structure and content of jobs is responsive to the wills and needs of workers to the extent feasible, given the technological alternatives, our indictment of capitalism must be tempered; for in this case alienated labor would assume the status of a condition of humankind, an externally imposed technological imperative.

What are the determinants of jobs in U.S. capitalism? The private ownership of the means of production and the operation of the market in labor, or more broadly the social relations of capitalist production, act to place the determination of the organization of production—and hence the content of the job—in the hands of a small group of employers, while compelling most individuals to relinquish disposition over their productive activities to these employers in return for a wage or salary. Moreover, employers determine the content of work-activities, as well as the direction of technological and organizational innovation, according to criteria manifestly tangential if not inimical to the concerns of workers: profitability and the maintenance of the employers' own elevated economic positions. Lastly, the product of labor is not owned by the worker; nor does the worker have a voice in determining what commodities the enterprise will produce.

The *prima facie* case, that the roots of alienated labor lie

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in the social relations of capitalist production, is thus quite strong. The needs and wishes of workers will be embodied in employers' decisions only to the extent that they further the latter's goals. The social relations of the corporate capitalist enterprise are organized to reflect the interests of capitalists and directors, to whom all other groups are subservient and even pitted against one another. However, the issue is really considerably more complex. For workers can express their needs, not directly through control within the enterprise, but indirectly through their personal discretion as to which jobs they will or will not accept. Indeed, the standard argument in liberal economic theory is an attempt to prove the following assertion. When firms maximize profits, and when labor and all other factors of production are bought and sold on markets where prices and wages are determined by supply and demand, then the structure of jobs will reflect workers' preferences, subject only to the availability of natural resources and known technologies of production. Thus the sphere of work is integrated, in the sense that workers essentially choose their job structures within the limits imposed by nature and the level of scientific knowledge.

Let us consider the argument in more detail. Suppose that workers are faced with a job structure characterized by repressive and routine jobs subject to hierarchical authority, and they decide they would prefer more satisfying work. How do they express this preference? Clearly by offering their services at a lower wage or salary to an employer who provides the kind of work they desire. Thus some enterprising employer will note that he can obtain cheaper labor than his competitors if he provides these jobs, and will look around for a production technique compatible with them, the (ostensibly lower) efficiency of which is more than counterbalanced by the lower wage bill. If he discovers such a profitable organizational or technical alternative, then the workers will get the jobs they prefer and his competitors will be forced to adopt the same production technique in order to hold their workers. So the story goes.

In this view, if jobs are unrewarding it must be due to either the nature of technology or the preference of workers for higher incomes as opposed to desirable jobs. The desirability of

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jobs is reflected in the wage at which the worker is willing to accept the job, or what economists call the supply price of labor. Indeed, most of us, in deciding our life's work, make some trade-offs between income and job desirability. The employer does have some incentive to make work attractive, hence lowering his labor costs. But does this mechanism render work responsive to the needs or wills of workers? We believe not.

First, there is ample evidence, to be reviewed shortly, that even within the confines of existing technologies work could be organized so as to be more productive and more satisfying to workers. That these opportunities exist and are resisted by employers points to the unresponsiveness of job structure and content to worker needs. Second, technology itself is not the result of the inexorable and unidimensional advance of knowledge. Rather, it reflects the monopolization of control over new investment and effective control over technical information by capitalists and their representatives. The history of technology thus represents an accumulation of past choices made for the most part by and in the interests of employers. Hence even the limits of present technologies cannot be exempted from analysis. We must ask, "Was the process determining the path of technological change responsive to the needs of workers?" Lastly, there is ample evidence that the choices made by workers facing a trade-off between higher incomes and more participatory workplaces (or other work objectives) are systematically biased by the compulsory forms of socialization—especially schooling—imposed on young people.

We conclude that work is a social phenomenon which under capitalism follows a logic of its own, apart from the wills of the mass of individuals affected by it. Thus alienated labor is a condition of capitalist society. It is neither a psychological condition of workers nor a product of modern "mass-production technology."

That the hierarchical division of labor is not necessarily efficient contradicts many deeply held, but empirically unsubstantiated, opinions. We shall discuss three of these. The first such opinion is that the productivity of capitalist enterprise and its victory over traditional work-forms during the Industrial Revolution demonstrate the unique compatibility of the hierarchical

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division of labor with advanced technology. The second opinion is that the fragmentation and routinization of jobs leads, in itself, to increased productivity, despite its deleterious effect on worker satisfaction. The third, and most important, is that no other known form of work organization is more productive than the hierarchical division of labor. We believe all three are incorrect.

Rather we believe that the success of the factory system in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution was due primarily to the tapping of cheap labor supplies, the extension of the hours of work, and the forced increase in the pace of work; that job fragmentation is a means of reducing the solidarity and power of workers; and that democratic participation in production tends to increase productivity.

The inability of new technologies to account for the emergence of the capitalist factory system in Great Britain has been documented by Stephen Marglin (see Bibliographical Note at the end of the article). He argues that the success of the capitalist production unit must be attributed to its efficacy as a means of economic and social control. First, if all workers could perform all tasks, their knowledge of the production process would allow them to band together and go into production for themselves. In the guild system this was prevented by legal restrictions—the guild-masters had control over the number of new masters admitted, and all production had to be under the direction of a legal guild-approved master. In "free enterprise" this form of control was interdicted.

Second, even within the capitalist firm, the boss's control depended on the lack of control of each worker. To allow all workers the capacity to deal knowledgeably and powerfully with all parts of the production process both increases their sense of control and autonomy and undercuts the boss's legitimacy as the coordinator of production. Yet it is this legitimacy which maintains his position of financial controller and intermediary between direct producers and consumers. Job enlargement and democratic worker control would soon threaten the political stability of the firm. That this policy of "divide and conquer" through task-fragmentation was central in the minds of bosses is amply illustrated in Marglin's cited essay.

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But if early factories used technologies apparently similar to the contemporary worker-controlled operations, why were the former able to undersell and eventually displace their more traditional competitors? To what was the increase in per capita productivity in the early Industrial Revolution due? The answer seems to lie in the system of hierarchical control as a direct means of increasing the employers' power over workers. Having all workers under one roof allowed the capitalist to increase drastically the length of the work week. Instead of making his or her own work-leisure choice, the worker was forced to accept a 12- or 15-hour work day, or have no work at all. Since all workers were paid more or less subsistence wages independent of the length of the work-day, the factory system drastically reduced labor costs. Moreover, the system of direct supervision in the factory allowed the capitalist to increase the pace of work and the exertion of the worker. Lastly, the factory system used pools of pauper, female, and child labor at much lower cost than that of able-bodied men.

As a result, the capitalist was able to pay generally higher weekly wages to the male labor force, while reducing the cost of output and appropriating huge profits. It was their greater capacity to accumulate capital, to reinvest and expand, which tipped the balance in favor of capitalist enterprise. But this was due to increased exertion of labor, not to the technical efficiency of the factory system. This situation forced the independent producers to increase their own work-day to meet their subsistence needs, given the falling prices of their product. In this way these producers maintained their position alongside the factory for over a quarter century.

Eventually, however, the factory system did win out on technical grounds. The reasons are interesting in light of our discussion of technological determinism. First, because only the capitalist producers had the financial resources to invest heavily in new machinery, inventors sought to meet their needs. They thus geared their innovations to types compatible with the social relations of factory production. Second, because of the large number of independent producers, it would have been impossible for them to protect patent rights, whereas the large size of the capitalist firm provided a stable and conspicuous market for

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the inventor. Third, most inventors aimed at allying with capitalist partners and going into production for themselves. All these factors lend to the pattern of technical innovation a strong bias toward the hierarchical, fragmented production relations of the capitalist firm.

The tremendous pace of technological change in the nineteenth century was of course a major factor in the success of the capitalist class and in the rapid international expansion of capitalism. And the development of new techniques, as well as the pressure for product standardization and rigid production scheduling, no doubt brought about changes in the social relations of production. Yet, our analysis, which draws heavily on Stephen Marglin's "What Do Bosses Do?", indicates that the division of labor and the power relations of the capitalist enterprise cannot be explained by technological necessity. In a path-breaking study of the development of the U.S. steel industry, Katherine Stone has documented that the social organization of work did not arise from technological necessity at all, but from the needs of management to *control* the process of production. In the period from 1890 to 1910, steel came of age in the United States. Spurred by the merger activities of Andrew Carnegie, U.S. Steel became the world's first billion-dollar corporation, which, by 1901, controlled 80 percent of the U.S. market. This phenomenal growth, which involved large-scale introduction of new techniques and machine processes in production, was securely founded on the hierarchical division of labor. Yet the evidence clearly shows that the new social relations of steel production were *not* technologically determined.

Prior to 1890, steel production was characterized by a great degree of worker control over production. The group of skilled workers contracted with management, receiving a price per ton of steel based on a sliding scale which reflected the current market price. The skilled workers then hired other workers ("unskilled") whom they paid out of their pockets, and agreed on a division of receipts among themselves. Because of their knowledge and control of the work process, and through the power of their union (the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers), the skilled workers had veto power

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over any management-proposed changes in the work process, including technical innovation.

This situation posed a crucial dilemma for the early steel magnates: How could technical innovation be introduced without the benefits accruing to the workers themselves? Clearly only by breaking the power of workers to control the process of production. In 1892, Henry Clay Frick was called on to do the job. Workers were locked out of the Homestead Mill, Pinkerton men were called in to enforce company decisions, and a "non-union shop" was declared. The Amalgamated Steel Workers Union was smashed, hierarchical procedures instituted, innovation proceeded apace, and the future of a high-growth and high-profit steel industry was assured. As David Brody concludes: "In the two decades after 1890, the furnace worker's productivity tripled in exchange for an income rise of one half; the steel worker's output doubled in exchange for an income rise of one fifth. . . . The accomplishment was possible only with a labor force powerless to oppose the decisions of the steel men."

Here we have a clear case of profit rather than efficiency determining the social division of labor. But once centralized control is imposed, it does seem to follow that efficiency dictates fragmented and routinized jobs. Indeed, this is the converse of a general proposition deduced from many laboratory experiments in organizational efficiency. Vroom has summed up the results of these laboratory exercises in his masterful survey of experimental literature in industrial social psychology. The evidence indicates, he writes, that "decentralized structures have an advantage for tasks which are difficult, complex, or unusual, while centralized structures are more effective for those which are simple and routinized." Turning this proposition around, we find that, given that the corporate unit is based on centralized control, the most efficient technologies will be those involving routinized, dull, and repetitive tasks. In a decentralized environment, the reverse would be true. This shows that the common opinion as to the superior productivity of fragmentation, as based on the observed operation of centralized corporate enterprise, entails a false inference from the facts.

Finally, the opinion that there is no known organizational technique superior to hierarchical control, seems also to be con-

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troverted by the extensive evidence on the efficiency of worker participation. The results of dozens of studies indicate that when workers are given control over decisions and goal-setting, productivity rises dramatically. The recent HEW study, *Work in America*, records 34 cases of the reorganization of production toward greater worker participation which simultaneously raised productivity and worker satisfaction. Also Blumberg concludes:

> There is scarcely a study in the entire literature which fails to demonstrate that satisfaction in work is enhanced or . . . productivity increases accrue from a genuine increase in workers' decision-making power. Findings of such consistency, I submit, are rare in social research . . . the participative worker is an involved worker, for his job becomes an extension of himself and by his decisions he is creating his work, modifying and regulating it.

But such instances of even moderate worker control are instituted only in marginal areas and in isolated firms fighting for survival. When the crisis is over, there is usually a return to "normal operating procedure." The threat of workers' escalating their demand for control is simply too great, and the usurpation of the prerogatives of hierarchical authority is quickly quashed. Efficiency in the broader sense is subordinated to the needs of bureaucratic control.

The lower productivity of the hierarchical division of labor must be ascribed directly to worker alienation. In a situation where workers lack control over both the process and product of their productive activities, their major preoccupation is to protect themselves from the arbitrary dictates of management. Their concern for the efficiency goals of management is at best perfunctory, and usually these goals are actively opposed as contrary to their interests. Significantly, many unions oppose current work reorganization schemes—even those allowing token worker participation—because workers have little defense against being displaced by productivity increases, and do not stand to share in whatever profit increases result. But this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that workers normally harbor a tremendous "reserve power" of effectiveness and inventiveness, awaiting only the proper conditions of control and integration to be liberated. The burden of proof has shifted markedly to those who contend that hierarchical forms of production are

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the necessary price of ever-increasing affluence. Work is for the most part "meaningless" and repressive not because of the nature of technology and the division of labor, but because of the nature of the class structure and the social relations of production.

Conclusion

In an earlier era the social order was legitimated by divine ordination. Ruler and ruled, oppressed and oppressor, wealth, poverty, and social position reflected a natural order laid down from on high. But science has replaced theology in the modern world, and with this change a new basis of social legitimation has come into being. The righteousness of things in the eighteenth century becomes their inevitability in the twentieth. This essay has presented a brief introduction to the explosion of the myth that the nature of work in capitalist society is dictated by science and reason in the form of technology and rational organization.

To locate the source of alienated labor in the social relations of capitalist production, and to understand the roots of these social relations in the class structure of society, is of fundamental importance. For social relations can be changed, and such changes in the past have been the major historical markers of progress toward civilization.

We propose a goal for the transformation of work, i.e., work as an *integrated process* wherein the dialectic relating our social being to our social becoming is strengthened rather than fragmented through the structure of the production unit. Integrated work means that jobs develop over time in keeping with our needs, to limits imposed by productive technology—a technology which, through democratic control, itself moves toward liberated embodied forms. The various experiments in worker control—however limited their extent—show the viability of this vision.

A thoroughgoing industrial democracy must be a cornerstone of a socialist program in the contemporary capitalist world. Yet control over the immediate work process by producers themselves, essential as it may be in the revolutionizing of society, is certainly no panacea, and may have little meaning if isolated from other fundamental issues. Workers' control,

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by itself, does not provide answers to questions such as: What will be produced, how much power will individual productive units have in allocating resources, where will production be located, where will people live, what will be the approach to leisure and culture, the role of work and creativity? If our ultimate aim is human liberation, we must tackle much more than the workplace, and our analysis of alienated work must be part of a more general program of socialist transformation.

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Many of the empirical questions treated only sketchily in this paper are given their due in our forthcoming book listed below. For general background, the reader might consult Blumberg, Marx, and *Work in America*. We have also benefitted greatly from Vroom and Whyte. The papers by Marglin and Stone referred to in the text appear in the *Review of Radical Political Economics,* vol. 6, no. 2, 1974.

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The worker can regain mastery over collective and socialized production only by assuming the scientific, design, and operational prerogatives of modern engineering; short of this, there is no mastery over the labor process. The extension of the time of education which modern capitalism has brought about for its own reasons provides the framework; the number of years spent in school has become generally adequate for the provision of a comprehensive polytechnical education for the workers of most industries. But such an education can take effect only if it is combined with the practice of labor during the school years, and only if education continues throughout the life of the worker. . . . Such education can engage the interest and attention of workers only when they become masters of industry in the true sense, which is to say when the antagonisms in the labor process between controllers and workers, conception and execution, mental and manual labor are overthrown, and when the labor process is united in the collective body which conducts it.

—Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*

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POLITICS AS SPORTS:

The Political Ascendency of the Sports Metaphor in America

BY IKE BALBUS

The Nixon-Ford years in the United States have been marked by a strikingly frequent application of the sports metaphor to the realities of organized political life. State activity is increasingly being cloaked in the rhetoric of the sports world; at times it even appears as if the language of politics is being completely absorbed by the language of sports. Thus the president becomes the "quarterback" who, along with his Cabinet and White House staff "team," pursues "game plan" policies designed to reach the "goal line" and to "win" the political "ballgame." This corruption of the discourse of politics by the discourse of sports alerts us to a possibly profound transformation in the way in which governmental activity in America is defined and understood: to envelop politics with the symbolism of sports is to transfer the meanings which we attribute

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to the latter to the former. Thus the political ascendency of the sports metaphor may well signal the increasing importance of sports as a legitimating mechanism of the American state. The purpose of this paper is to develop a tentative and unabashedly speculative interpretation of this phenomenon.

The Senate Watergate hearings have revealed the extent to which sports language has come to permeate the day-to-day operations of the American executive branch. Thus one conspirator absolves himself from any moral responsibility by claiming that he was "just a member of the team"; another informs us that his threats to expose the cover-up led to efforts on the part of his superiors to dissuade him on the grounds that he was "destroying the game plan"; and yet another confesses that his moral scruples were overcome by orders from the officers of the Committee to Re-Elect the President to "play ball" and by his consequent fears of not being considered a "team player." Those who would interpret this as nothing more than the toadying of administration sycophants before the linguistic "line" established by their boss, and thus attribute the ascendency of the sports metaphor to the idiosyncrasies of individual presidents who just happen to be avid sports fans, would be hard pressed to account for the growing use of sports language on the part of political commentators in the "independent" and often anti-administration press. Consider the language of an article in the financial pages of the *New York Times* entitled "What Will Nixon Team Do In Second Half?":

> The new Nixon team is in the locker room right now, getting ready for the second half. What, Wall Street is wondering, will be the new game plan? In a powerful scoring drive late in the first half, the veteran coach of the G.O.P. Elephants got the economic ball rolling well. Now with the second half about to begin, the Elephants have a tricky problem to deal with: the economy has developed so much momentum that there's a danger that it could run right past the goal line of full employment, clear out of the end zone and smack into a new round of inflation. The penalty for this kind of infraction . . . would clearly be to call the play all the way back to tight money. . . . [But] it's a tricky business trying to read Mr. Nixon's play book in advance.[1]*

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

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This example is extreme, but hardly unique. Indeed, the widespread adoption of the sports metaphor for the purposes of political description and analysis recently led a leading *New York Times* sportswriter to complain that if political analysts insist on using sports terms, they should at least use them correctly, with a proper understanding of and respect for their original meaning![2]

The ubiquity of the sports metaphor suggests that it is performing important functions within American society, and thus invites us to develop a structural explanation of its significance. A clue as to how such an explanation must proceed is provided by the fact that the increasingly frequent political application of sports language coincides with the increasingly important economic role of organized sports in America. The rise of monopoly capital in America has transformed sports from an elite preoccupation into a giant, mass-spectator industry which more and more dominates the everyday, non-working life of the average American male. Paul Hoch has demonstrated how the dictates of monopoly capital have shaped the form and content of organized sports, to the point where all the exploitative relationships within the business world find their reflection in the relationships among the various participants in the sports world.[3] Thus the paradox before us is that language drawn from sports is being used to describe and interpret political life precisely at that point in time when sports are being transformed into a Big Business; as sports have become *in reality* more and more like work, politics is increasingly being cloaked in the rhetoric, and thus taking on the *appearance*, of sports. This suggests that any attempt to understand the political transformation entailed in the ascendency of the sports metaphor must ground itself in an analysis of the economic dynamics which underlie the transformation of sports themselves. An adequate explication of the legitimating role of the sports metaphor, in other words, must be rooted in the problematic of the advanced American capitalist state.

I have argued elsewhere that the increasingly voluminous and complex functions which advanced capitalism imposes on the American state cannot be successfully performed within

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the traditional, liberal-democratic and pluralistic structures of this state without abrogating the legitimating norms associated with these structures. The accumulation functions of the American state, in other words, stand in inverse relationship to the availability of appropriate legitimating mechanisms. As Habermas and others have pointed out, the response to this contradiction over the past decade or so has been the academic articulation and subsequent popularization of the technocratic model of politics, which functions to depoliticize state economic decisions by establishing their allegedly neutral, "quasi-scientific" character, to the point where science itself increasingly vies with the rule of law and "interest-group liberalism" as what Marx called the "illusory general interest" in America.[4] According to the technocracy thesis, as politics becomes *technique*, *political rulership increasingly becomes a function of* scientific or technical *expertise* which is employed for the purpose of *planning* the future needs and direction of the society. Thus the technocracy thesis functions to consolidate the new state structure and the pervasive functions it performs on behalf of private capital by denying the applicability of the potentially subversive, traditional political norms to this structure and its functions: state structures need not be democratic or even pluralistic because the functions which they perform are not political at all but rather "scientific." Indeed, if the exercise of political authority increasingly approximates the model of the technical authority of the airline pilot, then any claim to question that authority on the basis of norms which uphold the political competence of the average citizen can and must be discounted on the ground that it constitutes a grave threat to the security and well-being of the entire society. Active citizenship, in short, becomes not only unnecessary but positively harmful; depoliticization is held to be essential to the very survival of the system as a whole.

Now we are in a position to appreciate the systemic significance of the political ascendency of the sports metaphor. Sports language is becoming political language at precisely the time when the efficient operation of American capitalism has come to depend on the mass internalization of a legitimating ideology which asserts the neutral, "scientific" character of state

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economic decisions, the scientific competence of those who make them, and their overall integration in the form of a plan. Indeed, my thesis is that *the increasingly frequent application of sports language to the sphere of state activity both signals and helps promote the internalization of this ideology* and thus the depoliticization essential for the reproduction of the American capitalist order. One way in which the neutral, "scientific" character of state economic activity is being established, in short, is through the mediation of the symbolism of sports.

The form of contemporary American sports is particularly well suited to this mediating function. There is in fact a remarkable structural homology between a contemporary sports contest and the model of politics advanced in the technocracy thesis: sports have increasingly become *technical* activities which require participation by *experts* whose activities are subordinated to the dictate of a predetermined *plan*.

Thus, to begin with, a contemporary sports contest is the very model of purposive-rational or instrumental action governed by technical rules and strategies.[5] The goal of sports activity is always unambiguous and non-controversial; participants do not come together to discuss or debate the ends for which the activity has been established, but rather take this end for granted and apply themselves in a single-minded fashion to the task of developing the most efficient means to achieve the predetermined, unchanging, and non-controversial end: winning. The strategic, means-oriented character of contemporary American sports receives its ultimate expression in the advanced, maximally efficient division of labor characteristic of American football. Football, however, is only an extreme example of the general tendency of all organized American sports to obey the imperatives of instrumental, alienated labor rather than those of symbolic interaction or communication.

As alienated labor, performance in organized sports is increasingly evaluated by means of abstract efficiency criteria rather than by concrete qualitative criteria; nothing more dramatically signals the transformation of what was formerly known as play into alienated labor than the universal obsession with the *record*—the constant comparison of performance on the basis of a common, quantitative scale—and the concomitant

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neglect of stylistic and esthetic dimensions. As Laguillaumie has argued:

> The law of competition is an integral part of sporting contests. . . . It begets, at all levels, *the search for maximum efficiency* which can only find its expression in the *precise* quantification of the work accomplished. This quantification requires a strict, precise *measure* which is internationally controlled in order that a standard be established—a world referent, unifying the practice of all levels: the *record*.[6]

Sports, in other words, increasingly consists of the search for the most efficient *technique* by which to achieve maximum output; the Taylorization of sports production has paralleled the Taylorization of factory production to the point where Laguillaumie can justly claim that "the champion is fabricated in the image of the worker, the stadium in that of the factory, [and] sporting activity has become a production which takes on all the characteristics of industrial production."[7] For the athlete as much as for the worker—and for all those whose interaction is governed by purely technical, instrumental norms—"the body is lived in the mode of an efficient tool"[8] subordinated to the goal of maximum efficiency, rather than as a source of immediate pleasure and gratification.

A necessary corollary to the instrumentalization of sports is the rigid distinction they enforce between the expert, active participant and the mass of passive spectators who lack sufficient expertise to participate in any but a vicarious manner. As the role of *athlete*—with its increasingly long and increasingly specialized apprenticeship—more and more determines the possibility of engaging in sports activity, participation on the part of the great majority of non-experts becomes passive and vicarious rather than active and direct; as Mark Naison has remarked, the vast mushrooming of spectator sports since the Second World War—as measured by their frequency of media exposure, the length of "seasons," the number of teams, etc.—has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of persons who actively engage in, and the frequency with which they engage in, the particular sports which they follow and support.[9] Whereas there is now an average of six hours of televised sports each Saturday and Sunday during most of the

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year, and it has been estimated that one out of three American males who read newspapers reads nothing but the sports pages, a study completed in 1967 found that "on the average day, only about one percent of the American population engages in some form of genuine athletic activity."[10] Thus the inevitable consequence of the transformation of play into organized sports is that sports increasingly assume the character of *spectacles*, produced by a relative handful of experts, which are designed for the consumption of the majority of non-experts, i.e., the rest of the population.

As in the case of any technical operation, maximum sports efficiency requires a plan which serves to coordinate the activities of the various expert participants; there is in fact no clearer example of totally planned interaction than a modern organized sports contest such as American football. The nucleus of the plan is the *play*, which dictates the precise function which each player will perform over a given time-span. Any deviation from the play—any failure of an athlete to perform the precise function specified—will necessarily result in a decline in team efficiency and, if such deviations persist, the "benching" or even dismissal of the responsible player. The more efficiency, the less spontaneity; the seemingly most spontaneous, even breath-taking movements of a football back, for example, depend on the capacity of ten other players to execute ten planned and precisely delimited functions without which no "spontaneous" individual achievement would be possible. In football, moreover, the selection of plays is not entirely the prerogative of the players themselves; rather, individual play selection is normally governed by a "game plan," elaborated by the coach (that most expert of experts, the only one who "knows the game as a whole"), which establishes a hierarchy among the different plays. Thus the drive for maximum efficiency, conducted by experts, strives to eliminate as much as possible the contingencies of individual choice and error and to subordinate all individual athletic movement to the dictates of a rational, pre-established orchestration. The activity of each part of the team is determined in terms of the function which it plays in relationship to the team effort as a whole, the functional relationships being es-

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tablished and coordinated by means of a thoroughly tested study which precedes the actual activity itself.

Thus organized sports in America have increasingly taken on a technical, "quasi-scientific" form. This only suggests, however, rather than demonstrates, the plausibility of the thesis that the application of the sports metaphor to political decisions serves to internalize the allegedly neutral, "scientific" nature of these decisions. A genuine demonstration of this thesis would require evidence that sports have assumed not only a technical form, but also, and crucially, that they have been imbued with a technical *meaning* in the consciousness of those who follow them. Only if sports "mean" technical activities to those who are exposed to them can we be confident that the sports metaphor is capable of transferring a technocratic meaning to politics.[11] It is entirely possible, in other words, that despite their increasingly technical form sports continue to have multiple meanings: to some they may signify "fair play," to others "competition," and so on.[12] Thus our argument presupposes that at least one of the meanings which people attribute to sports is a technical one, and, moreover, that this technocratic meaning is evoked when political activity is described in the language of sports.

There is no conclusive evidence on this point, but at least two things can be said in favor of our interpretation. First, the dominant American spectator sport—the sport which has replaced baseball as the one ranked by opinion polls as the most popular American spectator sport[13]—is football, which is, as I have already suggested, the most technical, "scientifically" organized of contemporary American sports. Since that which most distinguishes football from all other American sports is its overwhelmingly technical character, and since football has become the most popular American spectator sport, it may be plausibly (but certainly not conclusively) asserted that the American public increasingly tends to attribute a technical meaning to sports. Moreover, it is precisely language drawn from football—the overtly technical language of "game plans" rather than the language of "fair play" or "competition" common to all sports—which supplies the content for the sports

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metaphor, suggesting that it is likely that it is above all the technical meaning of sports which is evoked by the application of sports language to political life.

If sports have taken on not only a technical form but also a technical meaning, the following considerations suggest themselves. First, insofar as the application of sports language to political reality encourages us to think of political activity as a sport, it necessarily encourages us to conceptualize political activity in purely instrumental terms. If politics is a sport, then the ends for which political activity is pursued become as unproblematic, as uncontroversial as the end of winning, and politics itself becomes nothing more than the search for the most efficient means to achieve this end. Political choice is transformed from a normative debate over ends into a technical search for the most appropriate strategies. Thus the conceptualization of the president as a "quarterback" or "coach" who pursues "game plans" designed to win the political "ballgame" serves to depoliticize state economic decisions by internalizing the ideology of the purely instrumental, technical, and apolitical nature of these decisions.

The depoliticizing consequences of the sports metaphor are vividly illustrated in the following exchange between then-Representative Gerald Ford and Senator Harrison Williams on the occasion of the former's vice-presidential confirmation hearings. Questioned about his future willingness as vice-president to disagree with presidential policies, Ford responds: "I learned long ago that after a play has been called, you don't go out and tackle your quarterback." Doubting the applicability of the football metaphor to the governmental process—the only public occasion of which I am aware when any such doubt has been expressed—Senator Williams objects to Ford's unqualified acquiescence to presidential authority, but nevertheless does so while remaining within the prison of sports language. He asks Ford what he would do if his quarterback got turned around and started running with the ball to the wrong goal line. "Wouldn't you tackle him?" This led Ford to recall a college football game of some fifty years ago when a player had scored a "touchdown" but had run the wrong way, and prompted him

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to answer Williams's question with the argument: "But that's the exception more than the rule."[14]

Notice that the inevitable consequence of Williams's (reluctant) acceptance of the sports metaphor as the basis for his criticism of Ford's position is the implication that the pursuit of undesirable political goals is as rare as the unintentional pursuit of one's own—rather than the opponent's—goal line. The characterization of political policies as "plays," in other words, necessarily commits one to the position that such policies, like football plays, are neutral, purely instrumental strategies designed to secure the absolutely unambiguous, unproblematic goal of winning: one need only object to these means—just as one should only tackle one's own quarterback—when they clearly bear no conceivable relationship whatsoever to the end of the "game."

If the use of the sports metaphor fosters the internalization of a technocratic legitimating ideology, the widespread acceptance of this metaphor testifies to the degree to which this internalization has already taken place. Here the Watergate hearings are instructive. As I have mentioned, witness after witness invoked the language of sports to describe, explain, and justify participation in activity which they were aware was illegal. Although many members of the Senate Investigating Committee professed a sincere desire to probe and uncover the reasons for what they considered a shocking eclipse of political morality, to my knowledge not a single senator objected to the profusion of sports language with which they were confronted: from all appearances, neither they nor the political commentators of the media were able to see any connection between the conspirators' conceptualization of their activity as a sports contest and their willingness to participate in it, between the corruption of the discourse of politics by the discourse of sports and the political corruption in which they were engaged. This connection, as I have suggested, is established by the capacity of the sports metaphor to transform the political problem of moral choice into the technical problem of strategic choice. The inability of committee members and political commentators to grasp this ideological transformation accomplished by the

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sports metaphor would tend to suggest that the distinction between moral choice and strategic choice has already become blurred in the American consciousness and is being replaced by a technocratic conception of politics.

By transforming politics into a neutral, quasi-scientific activity, the sports metaphor also serves to justify the exclusion from participation in this activity of all those who have not acquired the requisite technical competence. If politics is a sport, especially an extremely complex sport like football, then only those who have mastered the technical rules and acquired the appropriate skills—only the experts—are encouraged to participate. Thus the conceptualization of the state arena as a sports arena encourages us to redefine the relationship between citizen and political leader as a relationship between spectator and expert participant. If sports provide the relevant model, then the mass of the population stands in the same relationship to the state elite as the passive spectators to the football team and its expert quarterback or coach: politics becomes a spectacle to which the masses passively react, which they may second-guess ("Monday-morning quarterbacking"), but in which they can never participate actively. In short, through the application of the sports metaphor politics becomes the preserve of the expert, and citizenship is transformed into acclamation.

Finally, the characterization of political leaders as following "plays" which are set forth in a "play book," and whose interrelationship is established by means of a "game plan," carries with it the unmistakable implication that political decision-making is increasingly a *planned* activity. It leads us to conclude, in other words, that the president as expert quarterback or coach has succeeded in establishing a rational coordination among his subordinates and their activities by means of a centrally established and thoroughly tested plan which militates against "spontaneous" deviations from the most efficient possible pursuit of the unquestioned goal of "winning." If one "play" fails to work, moreover, we need not fear, since we can be confident that the president and his team, like any other, have an arsenal of plays at their disposal which can be used to adapt to any possible contingency. Thus the sports metaphor is capable of contributing to the internalization of

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the third and final component of the technocratic ideology—namely that state decisions are increasingly planned and co-ordinated—and thereby of helping to mask the continued dominance of the specifically capitalist imperatives to which this "planning" is in actuality largely nothing more than a response.

If the political effectiveness of the sports metaphor rests on the technical form and meaning of organized sports, then any challenge to this form and meaning will necessarily threaten to undermine the legitimating power of the sports metaphor. There are signs, moreover, that such a challenge is in progress. The past few years have been marked by a growing resistance to the commercialization and instrumentalization of athletic activity. The so-called "jock liberation movement"—the highly publicized refusal of professional and "amateur" athletes to consent to their continued brutalization and exploitation—is but the tip of an iceberg whose base includes the efforts of growing numbers of young people to redefine the form and meaning of sports:

> If we look around us, we will see that there are new patterns of athletic participation and physical exercise *already emerging* that are radically antagonistic to the commercial sports scene in America. Men and women playing soccer, volleyball, basketball, and touch football in newly non-competitive ways; women taking a growing interest in physical conditioning and the martial arts (karate, judo, etc.); parents bringing up male and female children with the same orientation towards exercise, sports, and physical fitness . . . these are the germs of a wholly new approach to sports which emphasizes collective physical health, a cooperative ethic, [and] the aesthetic dimensions of athletics.[15]

Thus a curious dialectic is at work which threatens to rupture the one-dimensional equation of politics and technique fostered by the political ascendency of the sports metaphor. Advanced American capitalism is generating struggles which aim at a de-instrumentalization of sports—which seek to restore the spontaneous, egalitarian character of playful activity—precisely at that point in time when the legitimacy of state authority and thus of the capitalist order as a whole is being buttressed by the instrumentalizing functions of the sports metaphor. Thus these struggles entail potentially explosive pos-

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sibilities. Successful de-instrumentalization of the form and meaning of sports in the face of continuing application of the sports metaphor to the realm of politics might well lead to a radical reversal in the political function of the sports metaphor: imbued with a new meaning, the sports metaphor would be transformed from a mechanism fostering the internalization of a technocratic legitimating ideology into a subversive, critical standard by means of which the existing technocratic state structure would be evaluated and condemned.

NOTES

1. *New York Times* (December 13, 1972).
2. *New York Times* (May 7, 1973).
3. Paul Hoch, *Rip-Off the Big Game: The Exploitation of Sports by the Power Elite* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1972). Hoch's analysis of the way in which organized sports contributes to the inculcation of the values and character structures consistent with the interests of the American ruling class succeeds in demonstrating the centrality of sports as a contemporary capitalist reproductive mechanism. His analysis does not extend, however, to the specific phenomenon with which this paper is concerned: the role that sports play, through the political application of the sports metaphor, in legitimating the *state* activity which establishes the necessary political framework within which the ruling-class interests are secured. For a review and critique of Hoch's important book, see Isaac Balbus, "The American Game of Life," *The Nation* (May 7, 1973).
4. Jurgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
5. On the distinction between purposive-rational action guided by a cognitive interest in technical control and symbolic interaction guided by an interest in understanding, see Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), passim.
6. Pierre Laguillaumie, "Eléménts pour une Critique Fondamentale du Sport," *Partisans*, no. 43 (Juillet-Septembre, 1968), p. 32.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
8. Ginette Bertrand, "Education Sportive et Sport Educatif," *Partisans*, no. 43 (Juillet-Septembre, 1968), p. 79.
9. Mark Naison, "Sports and the American Empire," *Radical America*, vol. 6, no. 4 (July-August, 1972), p. 110.
10. J. P. Robinson, "Time Expenditures on Sports Across Ten Countries," *International Review of Sport Sociology*, no. 2 (1967), quoted in an unpublished paper by Simon Rosenblum, "Sport: More than a Spectacle." I am also indebted to Rosenblum for the estimates of sports exposure on television and in the newspapers.
11. For this caveat I am indebted to Mike Brown.
12. That sports may have multiple meanings suggests that the legitimating role of the sports metaphor may be even more complex than I have described it in this paper. Insofar as sports signify not only technical activity, but also "fair play" and "competition," it may be that

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the sports metaphor is also capable of reviving the "older" legitimating ideologies of the rule of law and interest-group competition, in which case the ultimate power of the sports metaphor may derive from its capacity to evoke simultaneously and reconcile the major competing legitimating ideologies of the American state.

13. *New York Post* (September 20, 1974).
14. *New York Times* (February 15, 1974).
15. Mark Naison, "No Joy in Mudville," *Liberation* (June, 1973), pp. 38-41.

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THE TWISTED DREAM

By James O'Connor

The Twisted Dream: Capitalist Development in the United States Since 1776 by Douglas F. Dowd. Winthrop Publishers, Inc., Cambridge, Mass. 315 pp., $8.95.

The Twisted Dream is two books in one. The first book is an excellent narrative history or reconstruction of capitalist development in the United States beginning with its poisonous roots in European mercantilism and primitive accumulation. This narrative is organized around six major subjects or, more accurately, six major dimensions of life in capitalist society. After his two introductory chapters on economics, economies, and capitalism in general, Dowd narrates the history of capitalist enterprise in America (competition, concentration and centralization of capital, monopoly, etc.) and then the history of the growth of capitalist material wealth (fluctuations and instability, inflation and crisis, depression, postwar boom, etc.). These two chapters describe capitalist development in this country from micro- and macroeconomic viewpoints respectively. Then Dowd tells the story of capitalism as a system of distribution (income, wealth and poverty, etc.). Next the reader is guided through the history of the development of "capitalist geography" with most of the emphasis on the

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capitalization of farming and the contradictory development/underdevelopment of urban areas. Following this is a chapter on the international development of a world economy with most attention paid to the United States as an economic expansionist and militarist-imperialist power. The book concludes with a history of the capitalist state from the mercantile period to the present day and a short epilogue. In sum, this is the only book that I have ever read which presents the development of American capitalism and economy critically and historically in terms of its main dimensions (organization of the capital unit, functioning of the economy as a whole, distribution of wealth and the social product, spatial configurations and international dimensions of the accumulation process, and the interpenetration between private capital and the state).

The Twisted Dream also analyzes and explains most of the crucial elements or aspects of American capitalist development. This is the "second book." Some books by radical or Marxist economists are in part narrative histories of American capitalist development. But there are no works that can be called major analytical histories, so there is really no book by which to measure *The Twisted Dream.* Even without any clear yardstick, we note right away that the treatment of detail in any book that has such a large scope must be more or less superficial, no matter how accurately it is rendered in a general sense. The question then becomes, is Dowd's conception of the totality of capitalist development in this country in some way novel or unique or suggestive or penetrating? Does the book help us understand what is specific to (or special about) American capitalism compared with European or Japanese capitalism? Independent of the degree of validity or plausibility of the analyses of specific processes and events, how valid or plausible is the general interpretation offered? My answer to these questions is "yes and no" and "a lot and a little," respectively.

There are at least three strategies for writing a comprehensive analytical history of a capitalist country. They are not mutually exclusive, but in most works one strategy is predominant. The first is to compare and contrast different capitalist powers at the same or different stages in their development. The second is to reinterpret the whole of the development of a country around a new (and usually bold) idea or an old idea whose significance no one has grasped before. The third strategy is to rely mainly on the analyses and insights of others (including specialists) and

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weave these findings and ideas into a fresh new totality. Dowd is right to choose the last strategy, I think, for two reasons. One reason is that, in the past decade or so, quite a lot of new work in radical and Marxist economics (e.g., Union for Radical Political Economics economists, Baran, Magdoff, Sweezy), revisionist history (e.g., Kolko, Williams, Weinstein) and rebellious sociology (e.g., Mills, Domhoff) has been written and deserves to be summarized and synthesized. The second reason is that Professor Dowd's personal contributions to radical and critical thought are largely those of an accomplished and experienced historian with a wide knowledge of world history since the Renaissance. This means that he is able to subject the analyses of the writers listed above (and many others whose work he draws on also) to tests that economists and sociologists and many, if not most, radical historians are unable to do. A side benefit of this approach or format is that it permits the author to present informally much commonsensical and practical economic and political wisdom, which is difficult to do in a work that systematically argues one big idea.

The main disadvantage of this strategy, as exemplified by *The Twisted Dream,* is the absence of a strong unifying idea that gives coherence to the work as a whole and at the same time helps the reader acquire a truly scientific understanding of the historical processes in question. There is, to be sure, one unifying idea in this work. Dowd argues the general thesis that the material achievements of American capitalism have been "overtaken and passed" by the social costs of capitalism. "Too many are exploited," he writes, "in too many ways, for too little; economic expansion has become too costly to human beings and to the rest of nature." (p. 3) The historical analyses in *The Twisted Dream* are meant to support this thesis and are described as the "heart of this book." There is the implication here that the social costs of American capitalism during its development stage were not that great or numerous in comparison with the material achievements of the system. I think that this is a dubious proposition, once we take into account slavery and other kinds of forced or semi-forced labor; land, water, and resource theft of native Americans and others; super-exploitation of late nineteenth-century immigrants and blacks and other oppressed national and other minorities; ruination of land and forests by independent and (later) capitalist farming and lumbering, etc.—not to speak of the social costs of American imperialism in Asia, Central America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. I hasten to add that Dowd is very much aware of

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these "costs" and tells the reader about all of them. But I think it is more accurate to argue that material expansion has become problematic in recent years not because of capitalism's social costs, but because of the contradictions which lie within the system of production and distribution themselves (of which social costs are merely one aspect).

This (Marxist) thesis would require an investigation into production and distribution (i.e., the labor process) which Dowd does not make. His basic analytical tool is "power" in general and "power to expand" in specific. He sees American capitalism as an expansionary system in search of investments, markets, raw materials, and so on, with little or no concern for anything else. He has many good particular explanations of this obsession with growth and expansion. One is the analysis of the slave South and independent farming, both of which required westward geographic expansion owing to the limits the production relations that characterize these modes of production placed on the internal or intensive development of the productive forces (to put it in Marxist terms). Another more recent impulse is the need for expanded world trade in order that this country may run trade surpluses to pay the expenses of imperialism without cutting into the markets of rival powers. Dowd's whole description of the United States as a power that combines economic expansion with militarism and imperialism, both institutionally and functionally, is in my view accurate and telling.

But a study based on capitalism as a system of power is in my opinion a second-best approach. A Marxist strategy which puts the relationship between the development of the productive forces and production relations at the center of the analysis and which employs an explicitly class analysis is preferable. I don't mean that Dowd doesn't give Marx his due in the general theoretical statements about capitalism, wage labor, profits, etc., which come at the beginning of the book. Keynes is also used in the analysis of movements of aggregate demand, employment and unemployment, fiscal and monetary policy, and so on. But if there is one writer whom Dowd relies on most frequently and heavily it is Veblen, who more than any other American social theorist (with the possible exception of Mills) relies on "power" as a central category of analysis. Dowd also frequently cites Robert Brady, and it is significant that Brady's best known book is called *Business as a System of Power*. My view is that if you are trying to understand the relations between capitalist states (or any

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states, for that matter), you won't go very wrong looking at power relations based on the monopoly of the means of ideological rule and physical coercion. The same is true if you want to understand the expansionary process of a capitalist state (and since so much of our history is the history of geographical expansion, Dowd is right on target when he writes about this subject). But if you want to understand the capitalist system as a mode of production or way of life, then it is necessary not only to recognize that power is based on the ability to exploit labor power (i.e., the existence and reproduction of wage labor) as Dowd does, but also to base the analysis of power on this fact, together with the fact of state power noted above and the general "power of money," which also plays a central role in *The Twisted Dream.*

I would like to speculate on why the labor process (i.e., the development of the productive forces and relations) is neglected in Dowd's book and then discuss the meaning of this neglect for Dowd's otherwise enlightening story of American capitalist history. One reason undoubtedly is that in the studies which the author uses (which were written by the authors referred to above, among others) the working class as such plays an insignificant role. This is as true for most of the work of the Marxists as it is for writers like Mills, Williams, and Kolko. It is also true for Veblen, whose investigations of labor did not proceed beyond the role of the university in credentialing labor power and the "technostructure" of the business firm. This neglect is being corrected by such writers as Harry Braverman, Steve Marglin, and Katherine Stone (I am also working along these lines). On the other hand, there are a number of good recent studies of American workers, work itself, the labor supply, and related subjects, which are not used in *The Twisted Dream.* These include Harold Baron's study of black labor, Gerald Grob's work on utopian elements in nineteenth-century working-class struggles, a number of new (as well as older) studies on women's labor, Herb Gutman's extensive writings, and also older and more traditional leftist works such as Philip Foner's history of labor in the United States. Yet there is a paucity of Marxist analysis of labor processes and working-class development which itself must be explained. I think that the real reason why workers and work play a small role in Dowd's book is simply that in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the working class as such was a historical object, not a historical subject. It was forged or made by the capitalist class, which was the revolutionary class (i.e., which revolutionized the

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forces and relations of production). The independent role of the working class was small and its struggles were almost always (and necessarily) a kind of conservative reaction to capitalism. The working class historically looked backward or, at best, attempted to conserve what it had already won, rather than looking forward to proletarian revolution and the construction of primitive socialist relationships within the womb of capitalism (i.e., primitive socialism). Dowd implicitly recognizes this in the analysis of Populism, as his choice of words indicates. "Populism was a movement," he writes, "based on the dire needs of its main participants and a nostalgic and hopeful view of what could be and was 'supposed to be.'" (p. 259) Far from organizing to smash the capitalist state, the Populists sought to use the state to protect the small farmers and businessmen, craft workers, etc.

In short, until relatively recently (and in terms of some accumulation tendencies still very much operative, up to now and into the foreseeable future), the history of capitalism in America has been the history of a developing mode of production, not a declining mode in which the self-organization of the working class at the level of both production and politics and culture becomes the crucial determinant of history and our understanding of history. So the absence of any sustained analysis of the working class in the labor process does not greatly mar the major themes of the book. Nor does the almost exclusive emphasis on capitalist power in an era of development when the producing class was increasingly proletarianized, i.e., transformed into capital or object. The stress on capitalist organization, institutions, and society generally, after the Civil War is well placed. Yet it is clear that any work written in the future about U.S. capitalism from, say, the Great Depression, needs to begin to reverse this emphasis and focus more on the independent union movement, the black movement, the women's movement, independent workers' struggles in production itself, community movements, etc. Some of these are anticipated in the epilogue, but barely so.

The real problem with Dowd's interpretation of American capitalist development is his failure to make a theoretical distinction between capitalism and independent commodity production as modes of production. Put the other way around, Dowd uses Veblen's method which contrasts "business" and "industry" — the former meaning the activity of making money and the latter meaning the activity of material production. "America is a business society," Dowd writes, "even in comparison with other

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capitalist societies. Unlike the others, we started that way; we have become even more so with the passage of time." (pp. 53-54) Putting aside the use Veblen himself made of the categories "business" and "industry," it is clear that the distinction does not permit us to grasp capitalism and independent commodity production as different modes of production. Hence, on the one side, Dowd repeatedly states that "the history of the United States is the history of a capitalist society. . . . From its first days, and setting aside those enslaved, America was a land of enterprisers—small or large farmers, artisans or petty manufacturers, domestic or foreign traders, low or high financiers. It was a capitalist society from birth; or, if not quite then, as soon as it could crawl. By mid-eighteenth century, America had the ability to walk. . . ." (p. 294)

On the other side, and this is a contradiction which runs through the entire book, Dowd recognizes the existence of a class of independent producers (which was internally differentiated in many ways, as the above quote suggests) as well as the scope and limits of the power of this class. The power of the petty producers was manifest after the Revolution in the form of the liberalization of land acquisition and pressure on state governments to build canals and railroads. (p. 155) I quickly add that land speculators, merchants, bankers, and others in the ruling class also supported these measures for their own reasons. But the independent farmers, artisans, teamsters, small traders, etc. (i.e., the class which produced values as opposed to the merchant/banker class which merely realized values), also supported them. The importance of the independent producers was also manifest before and during the Civil War. Dowd retells the story of the small but growing class of northern industrialists which needed the support of the western farmers against the planter-dominated South. The author then narrates the next act in the drama, namely, the betrayal of the independent producers (especially the farmers) by the capitalists after the former had outlived their usefulness. The high protective tariffs of 1862, the step-up of immigration through the revival of indentured labor, the demonetization of silver, etc., were major steps along the road of the defeat of independent commodity production by the capitalists. (p. 205) More, Dowd makes the important point that the widespread existence of land ownership (and, I may add, artisan tools, teamster horses and wagons, and small-enterprise means of production of all kinds) "yielded a level and a distribution of

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income that provided the first *domestic* mass market for modern production." (p. 58) In other words, independent production partly negates itself because of the markets it provides for new, large-scale capital.

Nor does Dowd neglect the betrayal of the small producers, especially the blacks, in the post-Civil War South. In the Compromise of 1877, the southern ruling class gave northern capital control over the federal government and also access to investment opportunities in the South in exchange for sectional political control and social hegemony by the southern ruling class. This resulted in the revival of institutional racism (Jim Crow) and at the same time the beginnings of the capitalization of the southern economy by northern capital. Capitalism thus did not need Jim Crow so much economically as politically, given the uneven development of the U.S. economy as a whole. The increasing hegemony of northern capital over independent commodity production through the last three decades of the nineteenth century was expressed in falling farm prices (and thus, in Marxist terms, the cheapening of the elements of constant and variable capital), rising rail rates, shortages of credit for farmers and small business, manipulated commodity exchanges, etc. Dowd narrates these changes, together with the story of the consolidation of Big Business rule in the North in the election of 1898. Although he does not make the connection explicitly, it is easy for readers to figure out for themselves that Big Business national rule and the sectional rule of the southern propertied class went hand in hand (and remains a big factor in American politics). I mean that Mark Hanna's success in 1898 would not have been possible without Jim Crow, the lynch mob, and southern terror against blacks generally. At this point, Populism—which originally was a movement of the (mainly) southern independent producers to maintain a way of life—degenerated into a narrow economic movement seeking high farm prices and little else. Subsequently, the American independent producing class began to crumble and was more or less rapidly wiped out. Because Dowd doesn't deal with this class on its own terms, we are left in the dark about the history of the host of small manufacturers, artisans, teamsters and haulers, builders, and other producers who based themselves on self-earned property. But Dowd does tell us what happened to the farmers. The misuse of the land west of the Mississippi and the dust bowl which was its result, and the use of laws presumably designed to promote maximum ownership of land, "did much to deliver the public domain to the large land, mineral, railroad, and timber companies." (p. 162,

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note 14) Later on, independent farming declined dramatically. Dowd tells us that the total number of farms fell from 5.9 million in 1947 to 2.9 million in 1970, while the acreage of the average farm doubled. Between 1950 and 1964 alone, the number of farms with less than 100 acres dropped from 3 million to 1.4 million. Today the old independent producing class is, for all practical purposes, gone and a so-called new middle class of farmers and businesses structurally, and in many cases institutionally, dependent on large-scale capital has taken its place.

The question arises, if Dowd's specific analyses in fact give due weight to the independent producers (or at least to the farmers), what difference does his claim that this country was "capitalist" from the beginning actually make? Is the complaint merely that he is using the word "capitalism" too loosely, in which case a little copy-editing could fix up the problem? I believe that the problem runs deeper than merely the author's choice of words. Let's begin with the question of what is and is not unique about U.S. capitalism in comparison with its rivals in Europe and Asia. As Dowd says, this country was different from Europe in its accumulation or developmental stage, because capital here did not have to confront or deal with the remnants of either feudal superstructures or mercantilist states. Neither did American capital, unlike capital in the European countries, have to worry about rivals in neighboring countries. Dowd is clear that U.S. capital was also unique in that it had to deal with the slave South. In fact, at the end of his book he rightly reminds us that "the very possibility of a decent future depends squarely on whether or not Americans can find ways to eliminate [racism.] . . ." (p. 139) So far so good. But there is a crucial sense in which American capitalism was the same as (and also different from) European capitalism, which Dowd doesn't even mention. Capitals in both the old and new worlds arose in societies in which the predominant mode of production was petty commodity production (excepting of course slavery in general and southern slavery in particular). The development of capital in both parts of the world was a process of the decline of petty commodity production. As Marx implies in the very last chapter of the first volume of *Capital,* the crucial theoretical problem is to show the dialectical relationship between the growth of capitalism and the decline of independent production. As we have seen, at the level of narrative history *The Twisted Dream* does not ignore this relationship. But we cannot say the same thing at the level of theory and analysis.

What was unique about American capitalist development in

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this respect, as Marx recognized, was the ability of petty commodity production to keep capital at bay for a relatively long time. The fact that independent production was especially long-lived (except in France, owing to the central role of the peasantry and artisan classes in the French Revolution and, hence, the survival capabilities of these classes through the nineteenth century) modified the character of capital when the latter subsequently emerged and triumphed. In particular, and as Dowd recognizes, the working class in this country has retained its "petty bourgeois" attitudes and aspirations more passionately than its counterpart in Europe. I cannot develop this idea because of lack of space, so let us go back to the relationship between independent production and capitalist production in the United States. Here, capitalists and independent producers shared a passion for the land, which meant that they made a common enemy of the native American and the settlers from Mexico. Both capital and independent production as modes of production were imperialist in the older and traditional sense of land-grabbing. But the capitalists wanted land not only as a means of production (and means of production of surplus value) but also to make available the labor power of the people who worked the land (or the immigrants and settlers who might work the land). Dowd does not bring this out. Capital needed the land to expropriate the farmers and create a labor surplus, which Marx rightly saw as the key to capitalist development. This was particularly true in the white settler colonies bereft of easily exploitable, native subsistence producers. The struggle between the two modes of production thus was a struggle over control of land only at one level. At the level of labor or production itself it was a struggle over who would control labor power. And at the level of politics it was a struggle between pluralist elements in Congress and the federal executive, and class-conscious centralizing forces led by big capital.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, primitive capitalist development in America was delayed. A large proportion of immigrants from England and Scotland and, a little later, from Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia sought to avoid the status of wage laborers and set up as independent producers. The first mining labor in Wisconsin was more (Cornish) independent commodity-producing labor than wage labor. The Irish immigration in the 1840s and 1850s was different. The Irish were used to drive the wage rate down in the New England mills, and in the Midwest became an urban (i.e., small-town) proletariat. But a cer-

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tain, although unknown, proportion of Irish immigrants went into business for themselves. All in all, I believe that it can be plausibly argued that capitalist impulses were weakened (and reversed?) during the first half of the nineteenth century by the development and growth of independent commodity production.

The expanded reproduction and general staying power of petty commodity production was the reason why massive immigration from southern and eastern Europe (and from Asia, as well) was necessary to create that surplus population which ongoing accumulation hinged upon. Potentially exploitable black labor was bottled up in the South, and hence the immigration after 1800 functioned like that "planned colonization" which Wakefield (and Marx) said was needed for capitalist development in the colonies where labor power was short. In effect, the surplus population of southern and eastern Europe was in large degree transplanted to the New World where it was transformed into capital. The effect was the decline of what had been a flourishing petty commodity mode of production. Seen this way, the new immigrants were not so much unwitting and often unwilling strike-breakers as "mode of production-breakers." This immigration hurt European capitalism in two general ways. First, it reduced European capital's reserve army and made capitalism there less flexible, i.e., it speeded up the development of the labor movement and left political parties, and accentuated rivalries between European capitalist powers. The transfer of surplus labor power from the Old to the New World thus played (an important?) role in the First and Second World Wars. This transfer also meant that European capital in recent decades has had to draw on the surplus population of the eastern and southern Mediterranean basin for its survival and growth, with all the attendant problems and opportunities facing the European Left today. The great immigration of labor power after 1870 or 1880 also undermined European capitalism and imperialism by strengthening the United States. It provided the first real basis for a strong capitalist economy and capitalist imperialism as contrasted with the expansionism of the slave South, independent commodity production, and (at the level of value realization) "merchant capitalism." What was unique about American capitalism (beyond the factors already listed) was thus the difficulty that it had in building firm foundations, not the ease with which it took hold and developed after these foundations were constructed. In other words, something like the opposite of Dowd's claim that America was capitalist from the beginning is true, as his own narrative

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proves. If you look at American economic development from the Veblenian standpoint of the growth of markets and commerce, the expansion of money and business, land speculation, etc., then it appears that the New World gave birth to capitalism early in the game and that successive years saw its more or less steady development. If you look at the same development from the Marxist standpoint of the coexistence of two modes of production or ways of organizing labor, then you can see that capitalist development as such occurred in relative terms only yesterday. The latter interpretation of our history explains the apparent (but not real) anomaly between the long life of American capitalism, on the one hand, and the weakness of proletarian forces generally and socialist forces specifically, on the other. It has been only recently that a working-class movement unencumbered by a conservative alliance with the farmers and petty producers (as well as the petty bourgeois utopian ideology of the petty bourgeoisie and craft workers) has even been possible. It was only yesterday that the new industrial working class created by capital began to deal with racism in the market for labor power (e.g., the industrial unions in the 1930s). Even today racism divides the working class in a hundred different ways.

As I have pointed out, the key word in *The Twisted Dream* is "power." One of the many tragedies of American capitalist development is that the small producers and traders and farmers who wanted power over their own lives could in the last analysis get this power only by having power over the lives of others. In a society with two antagonistic modes of production coexisting uneasily, the only way to avoid becoming a wage laborer is to become a capitalist (or professional, etc.). If capitalism in this country was sooner or later inevitable, one important question was, who would be the new capitalist ruling class? The answer of course is the white northern European settler. The WASP petty producers, small merchants, and bankers cannibalized themselves, some becoming capitalists, the majority becoming wage slaves. How many transformed themselves from older propertied class and ruling class to new capitalist ruling class (and where and under what conditions and so on) and how many sank into the proletariat should be studied and estimated. How many clung to their independence but lacked the ambition, money, fear, etc., to become capitalists and hence lived out their lives in a kind of pre-capitalist bliss (such as one side of my family, English gardeners, whose business experience began and ended at the local flower store)

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is also unknown. The reason these and related questions haven't been asked very often is that Marxism is relatively undeveloped in this country. One reason for the undeveloped state of Marxism is that capitalist development came relatively late.

The new capitalist ruling class of ex-planters, merchants, money-lenders, speculators, artisans, farmers, teamsters, builders, etc., who had run the slave trade and enslaved the blacks, pushed the native Americans aside, stolen the land of the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest and California (many of whom removed their share of native Americans earlier), now forged a new mode of production. They now added the exploitation of wage labor to their list of crimes. This makes the United States capitalist class uniquely rapacious, especially in its declining stage, with its political system now highly suspect and moral hegemony coming to an end, and also makes the growing opposition to this class by blacks and other oppressed and exploited minorities equally bitter and total.

To sum up, Dowd's method emphasizes the role of "business," markets, money making, and so on, rather than the exploitation of labor power and the labor process in American capitalist development. This leads the author to play down the class struggle, women's labor, the hours struggle, and all the other tendencies and trends which strengthened accumulation or disaccumulation tendencies in accordance with whether they made more (or less) and more easily (or less easily) exploitable labor power available. *The Twisted Dream* for the most part remains at the level of exchange or the market. It weds Veblen's views on the unproductive character of "business" and Keynes's theory of the increasing importance of "business" for sales and spending and the survival of capitalism (see e.g., pp. 81, 105). At this level, the analysis is creative and thought-provoking. But there is the other and more basic level of production or labor that is not so much dealt with inadequately as not dealt with at all. Thus, for example, it is missed that immigration from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries not only solved the problem of the shortage of labor power, but also permitted a high rate of exploitation and profit and accumulation independent of the rate of technical progress. The "American miracle" was rooted in high rates of both absolute and relative surplus value. Neither Veblen nor Keynes was a surplus-value theorist, and Dowd's emphasis on productivity in the technical sense as contrasted with the social sense of the expansion of surplus value

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results in a general analysis which is not so much wrong as incomplete.

To conclude with another and contemporary problem, I believe that a further implication of ignoring labor and surplus-value production is an inability to identify one of the main contradictions of American capitalism today. As Dowd states, expanding demand via mass consumption and militarism "solves" the realization problem. But the author doesn't recognize that the other side of this program and policy is the reduction of the rate of exploitation and hence the "Marxian" rate of profit. In my view, this is one major contradiction of developed capitalist economies today and, together with other tendencies, is an element in the process of capital "disaccumulation" (to my knowledge, Martin Sklar first used this word), not accumulation. Expanding the reproduction costs of labor power or expanding mass needs as part of the solution to the realization problem (the other part being the expansion of reproduction expenses, i.e., the social expenses of warfare-welfare spending) means that capitalists today understand the current crisis as arising from too much demand and production of consumer goods and too little profit available for investment-goods productions, i.e., as a kind of disproportionality problem. As a class, the capitalists want a government policy which will reduce working-class needs, wages, and consumption (i.e., increase the rate of exploitation), on the one hand, and increase investment and profits, on the other. But as owners of individual capital units which compete with each other and with foreign and international capital, they all still depend on product innovation, forced obsolescence, and other elements which make up the "sales effort" and which *reduce* the rate of exploitation. This is a super-contradiction, the resolution of which will depend on future political alignments and struggle. I am not marking *The Twisted Dream* down because Professor Dowd doesn't have an answer to this kind of question, but rather because the book doesn't begin to raise it. Yet, all in all, it raises enough good questions and supplies enough good answers to be useful and valuable to students and readers who want to find most of the main themes in the history of American economy and capitalism between one set of covers.

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IMPERIALISM AND REVOLUTION IN SOUTH ASIA

By Aijaz Ahmad

Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia, Kathleen Gough and Hari P. Sharma, eds. Monthly Review Press, 1973, 470 pp. $15; paperback $4.95.

The four regimes of South Asia, two led by men, two by women, are remarkably similar. India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are ruled by single-party governments; Sri Lanka tolerates rather more diversity in both government and official opposition, but without seriously impairing the ruling party's hegemony. All four countries have liberal constitutions, but each is governed under a version of Defense Rules that effectively abrogates the liberal clauses and makes autocracy possible. Standards of living vary greatly, according to country, class, and region; but the *rate* of economic deterioration is much the same everywhere. Officially, all four countries are "socialist." But theirs is not even the petty bourgeois socialism of, say, Tanzania or modern-day Iraq, where lack of both large-scale feudalism and a bourgeois class has meant that appreciable accumulation is possible only in the context of state appropriation and supervision. Pakistan is quite largely feudal and has developed a bourgeois class that is dependent externally but monopolistic internally. The Indian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, is unquestionably as developed as is possible in a very underdeveloped country. In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, too, pockets of bourgeois

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accumulation are fabulous, though neither large enough nor matured enough to form the basis of full-fledged classes.

These super-elites run the four regimes, and theirs is a "socialism" of the over-privileged. The intent is of course to deflect and confuse the mass movements, but the rhetoric has been sustained nevertheless with extraordinary overt support from right-wing Communism. If Pakistan's only Lenin Prize Winner is today an advisor to President Bhutto and if the pro-Moscow Communists act under the guardianship of the regional feudal class within the National Awami Party, Sri Lanka boasts a sizable Trotskyist opposition that sits well-behavedly in Parliament. If Mujib's regime in Bangladesh has Russian blessings and explicit support from pro-Moscow Communists, the Communist Party of India (Moscow-recognized) votes with Indira Gandhi in Parliament and has joined the Congress as junior partner in the new government of Orissa state.

This collusion of right Communism has occurred in the most critical period of state violence against the revolutionary Left. The 1971 massacres of the working-class movement in Sri Lanka were surely the bloodiest in the island's recent history and paved the way for the state to acquire and put in permanent operation, with consent of the parliamentarian Communists, a repressive apparatus that indiscriminately kills, tortures, and imprisons the revolutionary segment. In Pakistan more workers and peasants were killed in 1972, the first year of Bhutto's regime, than in the decade (1959-1968) of Ayub's military rule. In India the 1970-1973 period saw the most sophisticated and massive counter-insurgency operation yet devised and tested in South Asia. And if state violence is sophisticated and coolly planned in India, terror under the present regime in Bangladesh is raw and stunningly arrogant. It is indicative of the new fascism under Mujib that Badruddin Umar, an eminently calm analyst who was in the past castigated by the Pakistani Government for being a Bangladesh patriot, should now conclude that state terrorism under Mujib has far exceeded the military terror unleashed by the Pakistani junta in 1971.

In its more skilled portions, the book under review, *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia,* sketches these structures and tendencies with admirable analytic precision. Here I am thinking specifically of Kathleen Gough's comprehensive introductory essay; the essays by Chattopadhyay and Bagchi on post-colonial economic development in India; Feroz Ahmad's fact-filled articles on recent developments in Pakistan and Bangladesh; and the nar-

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ratives of the intricate history of splits and ups and downs in the revolutionary movements in India and Sri Lanka respectively, by Mohan Ram and Obeysekara. In addition, there is Hamza Alavi's valuable theoretical contribution on the character of the state in post-colonial societies, which studies the rise of the military-bureaucratic elites in the Third World, with specific reference to Pakistan.

Gough's introductory piece sets the tone and defines the conceptual unity of the book. She first documents the failure of the post-colonial economic and political structures which became conclusively evident in the 1960s. This crisis, she argues, led directly to the mass upsurge observable in the growth of left Communism in India, the anti-militaristic movement in Pakistan, the radical nationalism in Bangladesh, and the almost successful insurgency in Sri Lanka—all reaching their apex in the 1968-1971 period. Each of these movements was either stripped of its revolutionary content, as in Pakistan and Bangladesh, or effectively suppressed, as in Sri Lanka and India. This was made easier by the factionalism, ideological underdevelopment, and organizational weaknesses of the Left. Gough concludes by pointing out that the solutions of 1971—the murderous assaults on the Left everywhere in South Asia, the imposition of a right-wing regime in Bangladesh, Bhutto's "progressive" cosmetics in Pakistan—should yield very fleeting relief for the ruling classes: the mass movements will rebound, hopefully with better ideology and organization.

Between the two of them, Bagchi and Chattopadhyay delineate the distortions introduced into India's political economy during the colonial period, the subsequent development of a large state sector in independent India with the blessings of the big bourgeoisie, the rapid collapse of that development model, and the growth of dependence and stagnation despite (and because of) Russian and American interventions in India's economy. Chattopadhyay emphasizes that the development of the state capitalist sector was not merely a mis-achievement of muddle-headed "socialists" such as Nehru; it was actively promoted by the big bourgeoisie, who expected this sector to construct the expensive infrastructure upon which the private sector could then thrive. The Indian bourgeoisie, the most developed in Asia outside Japan, thus pursued for a period of time a model of development favored by Russian doctrine. The model began to falter within the first decade; and since the later 1950s even this national bourgeoisie, more developed than most, has learned to live within its comprador confines.

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Feroz Ahmad first analyzes the structural inevitability of insurrection by *all* classes of Bangladesh so long as the region served as an "internal colony" for Pakistan; in resolving the national contradiction, the creation of a sovereign Bangladesh has led to a situation where class struggle is now inevitable among the Bengali people themselves. Then, his second article examines the crisis of the ruling classes in Pakistan on the eve of the creation of Bangladesh and describes the imperatives which led to the modification of the military-bureaucratic structure of government to allow the progressive landlords and the petty bourgeoisie a provisional role in the ruling alliance.

Finally, Mohan Ram and Obeysekara provide us with a wealth of details about the development and fate of the Left in India and Sri Lanka. Mohan Ram impresses me with his factual narrative but strikes me more as a professional historian, and it is hard to tell where his own commitments are. I do not dispute the facts he gives, and the history of factionalizations he details is a necessary one. But the stance is discomfiting, owing to its academic core which remains external to what it describes. Obeysekara's piece on Sri Lanka, on the contrary, has admirable brevity, immediacy, and conceptual grasp. I wish something comparable was available for understanding the Naxalbari experience in West Bengal.

The foregoing, along with Mukherjee's essay on Bangladesh and articles on Thanjavur by Gough and Shivaraman, should together prove more rewarding than any other book on South Asia. That said, I should also register a major complaint.

Most articles in the book end with affirmations of the revolutionary faith. Repeatedly we hear of a revolution that is just around the corner, of the red sun rising, of the conviction that the chain of events that started with the dismemberment of Pakistan should lead shortly to revolutions, first in Bangladesh, then West Bengal, then India, then all of South Asia. The enthusiasm is admirable. But who, precisely, will make the revolutions? Books of this kind are normally not expected to answer that question, but this one committed itself to doing just that. The title arouses expectations, an entire section is explicitly entitled "The Rise of the Revolutionary Movement"; the book concludes with a rather oracular piece by Tariq Ali, who takes the business of clairvoyance seriously. In context, one wishes that the book had analyzed the experience of the revolutionary organizations with the same care

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that is employed abundantly in examining the structure of imperialism and the post-colonial ruling classes. Here I shall comment on the contributions of four authors who raise the issue, listing them in an ascending order of importance: Tariq Ali, Inquilab Zindabad, Hari Sharma, and Hamza Alavi's second article, "Peasants and Revolution."

The most charitable thing to be said of Tariq Ali is that he seems to mean well most of the time and hopes always for the best. He says, rightly, that contradictions in South Asia are so acute that revolution is inevitable. That is no news. The objective factor has been ready in South Asia for decades now. It is the acute underdevelopment of the subjective factor—the extreme fragmentation of the Communist movement, the strength of revisionism particularly in India, a serious theoretical impasse, the tactical immaturity of movements such as the Naxalbari, the almost perennial failure to find organizational forms for the rural landless laborers, and so on—which has thwarted a winning socialist strategy in South Asia. But Tariq Ali circumvents the concrete problems by asserting a rather anarchistic enthusiasm for all signs of disruption, irrespective of their class origins or impact on the dynamic of class struggle. The unpreparedness of the subjective factor goes unexamined, the crisis of the ruling classes is cited as sufficient condition for "seizure of power," and failures of the Left in South Asia are ritually blamed on poor old Mao Tse-tung.

The faith that revolution will occur as a function of the ruling class is displayed also in parts of Sharma's otherwise valuable contribution. Trained in Marxist economic sociology, Sharma examines the contradictions of the Green Revolution and concludes, rightly I think, that the gains of this strategy in increasing total output are already beginning to be overshadowed by the accompanying structural consequences. For mechanization of agriculture and the expansion of landholdings by rich and middle peasants have generated a vast new rural proletariat with no market for its labor power in either the agrarian or the urban sectors. None could disagree. But to move from this to a simple assertion that this development will of itself promote a new revolutionary upsurge is rather schematic. Recent experience in India suggests that economic crisis in the absence of a viable left Communist party tends to strengthen dissident elements of the ruling class itself. The recent economic deterioration has surely eroded Indira Gandhi's position, but the main beneficiaries have been parties to the right of Congress, not the revolutionary Communists.

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Inquilab Zindabad (pseudonym for a CPI-ML* cadre) does not believe that revolutions occur as automatic consequences of crises, and he seeks an activist strategy. His formulations should evoke no surprise among those who are familiar with the tactical premises of the Naxalbari insurrection: "Guerrilla armed struggle . . . [should] precede, rather than follow, the creation of mass movements." He further postulates "annihilation of class enemies," which here means assassination of individual landlords, bureaucrats, and capitalists; organizing the urban unemployed to "leave the cities and take up the revolution" in the countryside and provide "proletarian leadership" for the peasantry; and "seizure of weapons from police, military, and class enemies." These tactics are adopted within a larger political and strategic perspective which repudiates the parliamentary road proposed by the Russians and adopted by the CPI and CPI-M, recognizes that the real arena of struggle in India is the countryside, and considers armed struggle to be the main form of revolutionary warfare. Now, CPI-ML has played a crucial and heroic role in putting squarely the question of militant struggle in India after decades of Communist passivity and postponements; that alone is historic. Nor does one quarrel with the broad theoretical premises. The efficacy of many of the specific tactical propositions is, however, another matter. The book would have been immeasurably richer if, alongside these formulations, one also had a summation of lessons learned from the practice of those tactics. CPI-ML has itself entered a phase of just such a revaluation, so it is permissible for its friends to assist in that task.

With Hamza Alavi's "Peasants and Revolution" we are in a different territory altogether. He is neither an uninformed enthusiast like Tariq Ali nor a full partisan like Inquilab Zindabad. Rather, Alavi is a Marxist theorist of considerable sophistication, and he puts forward major propositions. First, he considers it inaccurate either to dismiss the peasantry as a non-revolutionary class, as did some early Marxists, or to postulate that only the peasantry in the colonial countries is truly revolutionary, as did Fanon and some others. It all depends, he says, on specific seg-

* The Communist Party of India (CPI) split into right and left factions in 1964, largely on the question of India's China policy, with the Left regrouping in a new party, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). Over the next few years, many cadres who proposed a more activist line of action left the CPI-M as well. One group, located largely in West Bengal, constituted itself into a Marxist-Leninist party, CPI-ML, and then got identified in the popular press with the Naxalbari area where the group first organized direct resistance.

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ments of the peasantry and the particular phase that a revolution may be undergoing. That is wholly sound. Second, however, Alavi also suggests that according to his reading of the materials from Russia, China, and India, the middle peasantry is most actively revolutionary in the opening phase of rural organization and that poor peasants begin to participate wholeheartedly only after the initial consolidation has already occurred. This last proposition is explosive indeed, not only because it undercuts the classics of socialism but also because, formulated first in 1965 or earlier, it also contradicts subsequent experience in South Asia, particularly Pakistan.

The history of rural organizing in South Asia is surely replete with failures to mobilize poor peasants and the landless; it is also true that until the mid-1960s organization was focused largely on the middle peasant. But that provides no evidence of the greater revolutionary potential of the middle peasantry in the opening—or any other—phase. On the contrary, it shows the unrevolutionary character of the organizing effort and accounts for much of the failure. This is particularly true of Pakistan, where socialists failed to organize the countryside for any revolutionary struggle so long as they concentrated on the middle peasant and neglected the poor peasant and the landless. In this phase struggle in the rural sector remained petty bourgeois in character and static in scope. It was only when and where organizational forms were found and new tactics devised for the struggle of the poor peasants and the landless that the scope was broadened and revolutionary momentum began to grow. Many considerations, including that of space, preclude citation of specific data. It is impossible, nevertheless, to understand the new peasant militancy in Pakistan except in the terms stated here. Also, in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and West Bengal, major breakthroughs were possible primarily among the wage-earning laborers on the plantations and in areas of intensive rice cultivation. In Tamil Nadu, organization was most successful among the lowest castes, again a wage-earning group in the servicing sector which also sharecrops in the countryside. In Pakistan, the focus of peasant struggle has had to be shifted from areas of middle peasantry to the heartland of the feudal (*jagirdari*) system; it has become axiomatic in that country for revolutionary cadres to say that the day migrant rural labor is fully organized the revolution will become irreversible. The problem here is that Alavi's article is woefully outdated. First published in 1965 and reprinted here with no updating, it fails to take into account developments that occurred after left Communists of

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South Asia repudiated the revisionist party that used to focus on the middle peasantry.

While revolutionary potential in South Asia is immense, organization for revolution is rudimentary and the new forms are still in their initial phases of experimentation. In Sri Lanka, the Left has not yet fully recovered from the lightning repression of 1971. In India, everything is increasingly atomized, Right and Left, and the economic crisis has grown to horrendous proportions without having thus far helped the Left to recover from its stasis. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, however, the state structures are relatively fragile and the mass upsurge is more rapid and widespread. It is in these two countries, wedded more closely to the neocolonial structures though they are, that acute crises of the ruling classes are likely to occur in the near future.

In keeping with Russian capitulation on the international scale, right Communism in all these countries is in disarray; strongest in India, it has agreed to serve as a mere auxiliary of the ruling party. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, it is being rapidly overtaken from the Left. The end of 1973 saw the creation of a formal alliance of all the left tendencies in Bangladesh, surely in response to the indiscriminate state repression. In Pakistan, broad sections of the proletariat, the peasantry, and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie are being welded together into a national force within a party that calls itself "nationalist in appearance, socialist in character." While the situation is still not ripe for the creation of a formally Leninist Party, conditions are being prepared for unprecedented cohesion and militancy.

Beset by these factors, the ruling classes of the various South Asian countries are rapidly coalescing. This is the basic significance of Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh. Salutary as the act is in its outward aspects, it is a recognition nonetheless on the part of both Mujib and Bhutto that they have a common enemy in the working people of the two countries. Now, normalization of relations between India and Pakistan is in the offing. Iran has already begun balancing its special relationship with Pakistan by making new friendly gestures toward India. A similar normalizing of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan is wholly conceivable. And the Pakistani elite's special relationship with the Arab monarchies is of course well known. Thus, a transnational alliance of the ruling classes in the entire region is growing alongside the growth of the mass movements. A quarter or more of humanity is involved, and the battle is being joined on a massive scale. Sub-

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jective weaknesses, augmented by the impact of the collusive relationship between the United States and Russia, are likely to contribute to prolongation of the process. But left Communism is now seriously on the agenda throughout South Asia. That alone is a historic fact of momentous proportions.

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(*Continued from inside front cover*)

for such a readership: most of it has to be completely rewritten by skilled editors who have trained themselves to do precisely that. It would be nice if MR could operate in the same way, but we can't. If we as editors of MR were to undertake extensive rewriting tasks, we would have to give up a lot of other things, including much of our own research and writing. And of course we don't have the money to offer jobs to competent rewrite people. So we have to be content with relatively superficial editing of manuscripts, and for the rest attempt to set a good example with our own contributions to the magazine.

All of which is by way of leading up to a plea to those who submit material to us. Don't send us long mss. with lots of technical terminology and academic paraphernalia. It doesn't help to tell us that we can rewrite and cut to suit MR's needs. It's up to you, the author, to plan your piece with these needs in mind; or, if it happens to have been written with some other purpose in view, to do your own rewriting. A "standard" MR article is not more than 5,000 words—15 double-spaced typed pages plus or minus a few, depending on size of sheets, margins, and type-face—(reviews and correspondence should of course be shorter).

Naturally, these are not rigid rules which we always abide by: we couldn't and still fill the magazine. We have to accept articles which are *not* clear and brief, attempting as best we can to eliminate jargon and unneeded footnotes, to cut where possible without doing damage to the essential arguments. But the fact that we have to make these compromises means that we are not succeeding in putting out the kind of magazine we want to, not serving the readers as we believe they ought to be served. To those of you who write for MR, or would like to write for MR, we say: it is not enough to have knowledge and ideas; they must be *communicated* in a usable form to those who need them. Please take this task seriously, as we always try to do ourselves. We are confident that there is hardly any writer who cannot improve his or her performance in this respect. What is required above all is determination, plus effort and practice.

We are glad to call readers' attention to *Dollars & Sense*, a relatively new socialist monthly published by a group of members of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE). The general perspective of D & S is much like that of MR, but it concentrates on providing topical coverage of current economic events and problems. We find it useful and believe most of you would too. The regular subscription rate is $5 a year (institutional and foreign rates higher), and the address is 324 Somerville Ave., Somerville, Mass. 02143.

Harry Braverman, Director of MR Press, will be one of the speakers at a conference on Marxian approaches to history, sponsored by the New School and Rutgers chapters of URPE and scheduled to be held at the New School in New York on April 5-6. For further information, write to Pat Clawson, 175 Garfield Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215.

We have been asked to announce that the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize (£100) for 1974 has been awarded to Maxime Rodinson for his book *Islam and Capitalism* (English translation, Allen Lane, London, 1974). Submissions for the 1975 prize award, either published or in typescript, should be sent before May 1, 1975, to The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize, c/o Lloyd's Bank, 68 Warwick Sq., London S.W. 1, England.

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THE DEBT TRAP: THE IMF AND THE THIRD WORLD

by Cheryl Payer

This book exposes and explains in nontechnical language the system of aid and credit in which the International Monetary Fund, as the international credit agency with vast powers to dictate internal policies in the borrowing nations, is the keystone. More specifically, this book is about the efforts of poor nations to gain some control over their own economies, the role of the IMF in frustrating those efforts, and the complicity of the elites in that betrayal. An important theme of this study is that the death of democracy in the Third World is due to the contradiction between a government's responsibility to its electorate and to its foreign creditors, represented by the IMF.

The heart of the book is a series of case studies which provide a fresh interpretation of the modern history of the Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, India, Yugoslavia, and Indochina from the point of view of their foreign exchange needs and resources, their balance of payments crises, and the effects of the intervention of the IMF. As payments crises are now becoming endemic even in the industrialized countries, this book has a relevance which extends beyond the Third World and the specific case studies it chronicles.

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